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LECTURES

ON THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

BY THE

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LECTURES

ON

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### LECTURE XLI.

LUKE VIII. 22-25.

“ Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. 23. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. 24. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this? for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.”

MEN are naturally fond of the marvellous. Whatever is extraordinary draws them forth in crowds, and attracts their admiring gaze and anxious inquiry. No doubt, the effect of this is only the gratification of idle curiosity, and the exciting of empty wonderment. But that is when the things which cause men's wonder have only a mock grandeur, or when the truly magnificent displays of divine power are not regarded with suitable dispositions. As for the works of God, they are indeed astonishing, and their right contemplation is, along with his own blessing, of admirable use in leading men to exercise towards him the graces of reverential fear, adoring admiration, holy obedience, and steadfast trust. “ I would seek unto God,” says Eliphaz, “ and unto God would I commit my cause; who doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without num-

ber:" and the song of Moses and of the Lamb teaches us to sing, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy." But however marvellous, in themselves the works of creation and providence unquestionably are, the constancy with which they are presented to our view takes away much from their impression; the divine wisdom and goodness are, therefore, conspicuous in that departure from the ordinary course of nature and providence which occurred in the miracles recorded in Scripture, as they are peculiarly calculated, both to serve as a proof of revelation, and to awaken our attention to its important subjects. The miracles performed by our Lord himself during his ministry on earth, were very numerous; and, of all the works performed by him whose name is "Wonderful," few, if any, are more wonderful than this of which we have here an account. We shall first consider the circumstances of the miracle itself, together with such observations as may appear to be directly suggested by it; and we shall then, as the explanation of the disciples leads us, consider what manner of man this miracle proved Jesus to be.

This miracle is recorded by Matthew, in his 8th chapter from the 23d verse; and by Mark, in his 4th chapter from the 35th verse. "*Now it came to pass,*" says Luke, "*on a certain day.*" Mark says that it was "on the same day, when the even was come;" that is, in the evening of the same day on which Jesus spoke several parables which were just related. Both Matthew and Mark make mention of our Lord's giving express directions to the disciples to pass over to the other side; that is, to the opposite shore of the Sea of Tiberias, otherwise called the Sea of Galilee, and the Lake of Gennesaret. Matthew says, that "when Christ was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him;" and Mark states that "they took him even as he was, in the ship;" that is, the disciples set out on the passage immediately, without waiting to make any preparation. "*He said unto them,*" according to Luke, "*Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.*" Observe here, that we have the example of our Lord and his disciples for going to sea. Though always attended with some danger, it is not a tempting of Providence to put to sea in circumstances not obviously improper. It is a lawful mode of proceeding from one

place to another, nay, it is sometimes an incumbent duty. Christ may still be said, at times, by the voice of his providence, to command his disciples to go to sea: and when he thus commands, and when duty calls, it is unworthy of them to hesitate, or to be afraid. Observe, however, also, that all who go to sea will do well to have Christ with them in the ship. You know the meaning of this remark: it is not that his bodily presence, as a passenger, can now be had, but it is that his spiritual and invisible, providential and gracious presence, is necessary to their safety. Wherever they are, and however they are employed, those who are leading a life of faith in Christ, have him always along with them; for, to all such he says: "Lo, I am with you always." If they have his providential protection, they are secure against all the literal dangers of the deep: and, at all events, if they have Christ in their hearts, if he and all his unsearchable riches be theirs, their souls are safe, though their bodies should go to the bottom.

Mark states, that "there were also with Christ other little ships." Probably, there were on board of these many whom the bark in which our Lord was could not accommodate. Though the multitude were sent away, yet it would seem that part of them were so affected by what they had seen and heard, during their attendance on him, as to resolve to accompany him across the sea, to enjoy a continuance of his ministry. So, at all times, those who profess to value religious ordinances should not grudge to go to a distance, or to submit to trouble, and, if need be, danger, in order to enjoy them. We often hear of people crossing seas, and travelling far away, to see interesting countries and cities, and entirely changing their abode from one part of the country to another, or from one town to another, for the sake of certain worldly advantages: it would be well, if there were more instances of persons acting in the same manner, in order to secure gospel privileges.

We are here told that "*as they sailed, Jesus fell asleep.*" Partaker of our sinless bodily and mental infirmities, he stood in need of the refreshment of sleep from time to time; and now, in particular, he must have been much fatigued with the abundant labours of the preceding day. Serene and sweet must have been the repose of one so holy, and so free from what can alarm the soul. So may every one of his followers, who holds faith and a good conscience, go to rest, saying: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart."—"I will

both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety."

As they were sailing, and when the darkness of the night must have been come on, "*there came down a storm of wind on the lake;*" a sudden and most violent tempest arose, so that "*they were filled* (that is, their ship was filled) *with water*"—"the waves beat into the ship," and they "*were in jeopardy,*" in the utmost danger of perishing. Though the disciples had put to sea at the divine command, yet they were overtaken by a storm. We learn from this, that, though to those who follow the path of duty, there is a promise that all things will, in some way, work together for their good, there is no promise of absolute exemption from trouble. If we desire, therefore, faithfully to follow Christ, let us not deceive ourselves by expecting what he has never promised. He and his immediate disciples were exposed to a storm, and we are not to look for a constant calm. It is even said that "*many are the afflictions of the righteous,*" and that they "*must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*"

During this tremendous storm, Jesus, as already noticed, was asleep; he was, according to Mark, "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." This appeared very strange to the disciples, and it also added much to their terror, for they evidently thought that he could not be aware of their situation. They "*came to him,*" therefore, "*and awoke him.*" According to Mark, they said to him (for various expressions seem to have been used by them), "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" There was, surely, in this, an expression of suspicion of his care and kindness, which, however the trying situation in which they were placed might in some measure palliate, it could not justify. And so it is, frequently, that even his own people, in the perturbation of trouble, entertain, and perhaps express, suspicious thoughts of him, for which they ought to be deeply humbled, and against the recurrence of which they ought to be much on their guard.

According to Luke, the disciples exclaimed, as they awoke Christ, "*Master, Master, we perish!*" This was an exclamation of extreme terror. According to Matthew, their procedure drew from our Lord this kind, though sharp rebuke, before he wrought the miracle, "Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith!" Though the following illustration of this passage must have been often given, it is too approp-

priate to be omitted. Cæsar, being at sea in a dreadful storm, maintained the most perfect tranquillity himself, while those around him were in dismay. When the pilot's, or rather master's, courage at last forsook him, and he was giving up all for lost, Cæsar addressed him, magnanimously, to this effect: "Why are you afraid? Remember that ye carry Cæsar, and the fortune of Cæsar." "Why are ye fearful?" said Jesus to his disciples. Had they known and considered all, they would have felt secure; for they carried a far greater person than Cæsar, and a far greater fortune than Cæsar's, if on a subject so divine, we may apply a word so heathenish. They carried "the Prince of the kings of the earth," and the everlasting destiny of men. Jesus had much more to do and suffer, before he was to die; and, bearing him forward to what lay before him, they were, in the meantime at least, perfectly safe. Our Lord here also exposes the true cause of their fear—it was that they had so little faith: for, if they had had all the confidence in his grace and power which they ought to have had, considering what they had already witnessed, they would not now have been thrown into this perturbation. So, all the fears of God's people either arise from want of faith, or are aggravated by it. It becomes them, not only to beware of rash complaints, but to look to him to keep them from unbelief, and to enable them to be of good courage.

Much unnecessary alarm, and much unbelief, as the disciples manifested on this occasion, they nevertheless also manifested some true piety, and even genuine faith; for, you will find from Matthew, that they betook themselves to Christ in earnest prayer, saying, "Lord, save us; we perish." It has been sometimes said, that if there be earnest prayer anywhere, it is at sea, and especially during a storm; and there can be no doubt that there is then something peculiarly calculated to draw forth the soul in sincere supplication for safety. It is very necessary, however, not to confound the prayer which is the mere cry of nature, with the prayer of genuine, habitual piety, and of faith. The desire of self-preservation, which has been called the first law of our nature, must not be mistaken for the holy and confidential turning of the soul to God in the time of trouble. Threatening external circumstances are often found to extort passionate supplications for deliverance from those who are altogether in a state of unbelief and impenitence. The cry of nature may, in such circumstances, be followed by



deliverance from drowning, or it may not; but it cannot be followed by any spiritual or eternal blessing: whereas, the prayer of faith has the promise of literal deliverance, if it be for God's glory and his people's real good; and, at all events, whatever befall their bodies, it will be followed by the endless salvation of their souls. The prayer offered up at this time, was the prayer, though of weak, yet of truly pious persons, of real disciples, and it was the prayer, though of little, yet of some faith. They plainly turned to the true source of safety at this time; they looked only to the Lord; and they seem to have, at last, looked to him with the expectation of deliverance.

How excellent, though brief, a model of prayer do these words furnish to us, when we think of our naturally perishing and helpless state because of sin! Let us go to the Saviour, sensible that such is our state, and fully convinced of his ability and willingness to help us; let us renounce every other ground of hope, and let us cast ourselves on his mercy, saying, Lord, save us, else we perish.

No sooner had the disciples made this prayerful application to our Lord, than he interposed for their deliverance. "*Then he arose,*" that is, he arose from the pillow on which he had been sleeping, "*and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water.*" Mark records the words he employed. "He said unto the sea, Peace, be still." He spoke, probably, to show that the coming calm was of his making: and, the words being accompanied with divine power, the wind and the raging of the water "ceased, and there was a calm;" or, as the other two evangelists express it, "a great calm." The miracle was instantaneous and complete: the wind not only ceased, but the waves, instead of continuing, as usual, to be agitated for some time after, and only gradually subsiding, settled immediately; and the surface of the sea became perfectly smooth in a moment. If we are to consider Luke's account as giving all the circumstances he mentions in the exact order of time, then our Lord adverted again, and after the miracle, to the weakness of faith the disciples had discovered; and, surely, the scene they had now witnessed must have re-established their faith. Having, however, noticed this point already, we need not now enlarge on it further.

No wonder that this miracle made a very powerful impression on the disciples. Luke tells us that they were "*afraid,*" and Mark, that "*they feared exceedingly.*" This

must have been a very different kind of fear, however, from what agitated them, when they thought themselves in danger of perishing in the waters: it must have been a reverential fear, a holy awe, suitable to a deliverance at once so gracious and so astonishing. And this is the fear that becomes all who, by pardoning mercy, are delivered from the danger of perishing eternally:—this is the fear of which the Psalmist speaks, when he says that “there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared,” and the prophet Hosea, when he says that “they shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter day.”

Luke also adds that the disciples “*wondered;*” they were amazed at what they had witnessed, “*saying one to another, What manner of man is this? for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.*” And well might they thus exclaim, for, it is difficult to conceive any thing more marvellous. But let us now, as their exclamation suggests, consider what manner of man, or rather person \* (for there is no word for man in the original), this miracle proved Jesus Christ to be.

1. *This miracle proved Jesus to be both God and man, and therefore able to save us from our sins.* His humanity was essential to his mediatorial character, more especially, to his being capable of suffering and dying for us: and that he was indeed a man, appeared, as from many other circumstances, so particularly from his being subject to fatigue, and requiring rest—in a word, from his sleeping. But that he was more than man, and more than a prophet—that he was the Messiah, nay, the true God, was proved by the wonderful manner in which he acted on this occasion. The prophets and apostles were careful to disclaim the honour of the miracles they performed; and their miracles were so ordered as to lead the beholder to think of a far higher power than theirs. In dividing the sea, and in the other miracles of Moses, the Lord directed him how to proceed, and bade him take the rod in his hand, so that it was evident he was merely an instrument. The apostles speak of their miracles being done in the name of Christ, and by Christ. Thus, Peter said to the lame man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up, and walk;” and to Æneas, “Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.” But, as to Christ’s own miracles, he left those who beheld them to conclude that they were his own, in the highest sense. There

\* Τις οὖτος.

is, indeed, mention of the operation of the Father; but it is in a way which exalts the glory of the Son, as working in the same way. Thus, we read, in John v. 17: "Jesus answered, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

But, while all Christ's miracles thus proved him to be God as well as man, the miracle before us was a more than commonly striking proof of this, as it is declared to be the peculiar prerogative of God to rule the sea and the winds. "O Lord God of hosts," says the Psalmist, "who is a strong God like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them."—"He walketh upon the wings of the wind."—"He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves:" and "he maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." God only can rule the sea, and it is altogether vain for any creature to pretend to it. The well-known anecdote of Canute, king of England, has very deservedly obtained a place in history. Some of his flatterers, having exclaimed that every thing was possible to him, he ordered his chair to be placed on the sea-shore, while the tide was rising, and sat down. As the waters approached, he commanded them to retire, and to obey the voice of him who was lord of the ocean. But, when the sea still advanced towards him, and began to wet him with its billows, he turned to his courtiers, and said to them that every creature in the universe was feeble and impotent, and that power resided in one Being alone, in whose hands were all the elements of nature, and who could say to the ocean, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." But the sea did obey the command of the Redeemer; and it is hence for us to acknowledge him as Lord of all. When, on a somewhat similar occasion,\* Christ walked on the sea, and calmed its raging billows, the disciples did well when they "worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." So let us acknowledge him, and praise him, and trust in him. He is indeed "mighty to save." As the Psalmist directs, † let us take him who is "the confidence of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea"—"who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people"—let us take this glorious

\* Matt. xiv. 33.

† Ps. lxx. 5.

person for "the God of our salvation." If we do so, all will be well.

2. This miracle proves that *the Redeemer never forgets his people, though he sometimes appears to do so*. The disciples reflected on Christ, as if the storm and his sleeping had been evidences that he did not care for them: but he was by no means unmindful of them. He might have prevented the storm altogether, or he might have remained awake, to lay it, before they applied to him; but he did neither: and yet he was truly mindful of them, both in the storm and in his sleeping; for thus an opportunity was afforded to try their faith, to lead them to prayer, and to enable him to interpose for their safety. By his providence, he was even caring for them all the while he was asleep: in respect of his divine nature, he knew what was passing, and was ready to prevent the foundering of the ship.

So he often appears, as it were, to stand by for a time, and to take no part in the trying affairs of his people. He allows, it may be, imminent perils to press on them, or painful and dangerous disease long to afflict them; so that they are ready to think, and to say, that he has forgotten them. Thus the Psalmist: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?"—"I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?" But the truth is, that he never forgets his people, however he may appear to do so. He is ever watching over their interests. He never slept, in this sense; and he never did, and never can, sleep at all, in respect of his divine nature. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep."—"He fainteth not, neither is weary." If there be any forgetfulness, it is on their part, and not on his. Nothing but weakness of faith can lead any of his children to suspect that he has, strictly speaking, forgotten them. Hear, on this subject, the Psalmist again: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Hear, too, the words in Isaiah: "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

3. This miracle proves that *the Redeemer will certainly deliver his people at last*. What should hinder him?—not want of power, for he is “the mighty God,” as this history abundantly shows—not want of knowledge, for he is infinitely wise to know how to save—not want of will, for he loves them, and delights to help them. He might prevent their trials altogether, or cut them very short; but he often brings them into trouble, and leaves them long in it, to let them feel their own weakness, to humble them, to wean them from the world, to teach them to look to him, and to get himself greater glory, and bring them to greater happiness, when he at last gives deliverance. He may delay long, but he will not delay too long. He will work for them at the proper time. Their extremity will be his opportunity. When they seem about to be cut off, then he will show himself. Therefore, “though the vision tarry,” they may well wait for it, because “at the end it will speak and not lie; it will then surely come, and will not tarry.”

Should any of the Saviour’s true disciples feel tempted to fear that their great unworthiness may provoke him to leave them to perish for ever, let his conduct on this occasion convince them that neither the weakness of their faith nor any other infirmity will prevent him from delivering them. On this occasion he reproved his disciples for their fearfulness and little faith; but he did not, therefore, allow them to perish in the tempest. So still, when he sees the partial unbelief of any of his people, he is offended with it; but he does not therefore utterly forsake them. We read of his miraculously helping several who were by no means so confident in his power and love as they ought to have been. He cleansed the leper, who only said, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” He cast the deaf and dumb spirit out of the son of him who began with saying: “If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us;” and who was then led to cry out, with tears: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!” In like manner, the soul of every one who can, we do not say merely repeat the words, but who can, in truth, and from the heart, say, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief,” is safe. Let not this remark, however, be mistaken and abused. Wherefore is it that we thus speak? Is it that unbelievers may feel secure, or that those who are fearful and of little faith may be satisfied? Far from it. It is that no true believer, however weak, may despair; and not only so, but that every true believer may be ashamed of the



remainder of unbelief with which he is chargeable, and see good reason to put it away from him. A strange and a gross mistake it is, if any shall consider this remark as an apology for distrust in any degree. Surely, the truth that Christ will not leave the weak in faith to perish in sin, if rightly understood, implies that their fears are groundless, and, if sent home to their hearts, and properly followed out, must have a great effect in delivering them from these fears, and in leading them to be "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

How delightful, then, to think that Jesus will certainly deliver his people at last; and that he is able to save them, and will save them to the uttermost. Whatever storms may be raised against them by sin, Satan, and the world; and however insufficient they may be in themselves, he will help them, and bring them safe through. Well may they, therefore, thus express their confidence: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."—"God is in the midst of his Church, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early."

4. This miracle proves that *Jesus is a being whom it is impiety and ruin to resist, but duty and happiness to obey.* Let those who are resisting Jesus, by neglecting his great salvation, and disobeying his commandments, consider that they heed not him whom the elements obey, and let them feel rebuked by the submissive winds and waves. What daring and desperate wickedness is theirs! How can they escape? How vain to contend with Him who can both raise and still the sea! O that they may become properly affected with their danger, and cry out, "Lord, save; we perish."

How becoming and safe, on the other hand, are the situation and demeanour of Christ's obedient people. Submitting to his righteousness and to his laws, obeying from the heart the form of doctrine he has delivered to them, let them study to become still more and more submissive, and desire that their every thought may be brought into captivity to his obedience. They are not indeed to expect exemption from trouble in the way of duty; but they may count on his gracious presence and assistance, and it will be their privilege to have their heart stayed, trusting in him. Embarked in his cause, they will find that he will be the pilot, and will

guide the ship. Though their spiritual ark may be tossed with the tempest, it will never sink. Other vessels will be seen going to the bottom, or dashed in pieces on the rocks; but theirs will outride the storm. Many of life's voyagers will make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; but *they* will all reach Immanuel's land; and, safely moored in the port of heaven, they will know, to their unspeakable happiness, that the Lord Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.

As the whole of this subject is peculiarly appropriate to *seafaring people*, so a few words directly addressed to them may be a suitable conclusion. You, then, whose employment it is to go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters, and who are so often deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, be thankful that you are now here, and do not pass over this history without getting some good from it. The age of miracles is past; but it is still the age of providence and of grace, and there is much in the account of this miracle which ought to impress you. You are here, then, to-day; but to-morrow, or soon, you may be far at sea. Need I remind you of the thousands who have gone to sea, and never returned? Need I speak to you of the large addition which will be made to the rising throng, when the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, or of the bodies which, having been cast on shore, are mouldering in the earthy bed, whence the whistling winds shall no more rouse them? Need I say a word to you, who know so well of the deceitfulness of the deep, or recall to you, who have often seen it, how, though this hour it may be smooth as glass, the next it may be swelling into mountains? Though you may put to sea in fine weather, none can tell how soon a mighty storm of wind may come down upon you, and you may be reeling to and fro, and be at your wits' end: nay, none can tell how soon you may be in a watery grave. But tell me this—Are you ready? Do not shift the question. Let conscience give the answer. Most certainly, every man who is chargeable with such crimes as profane swearing, wilful neglect of ordinances, impurity, and intemperance, unrepented of, unforgiven, and unforsaken, ought at once to confess that he is not ready: and so also ought every man of you, who, though more decent, is yet in his natural state; that is, ignorant, unbelieving, and unrenewed. O Listen to the warning voice now addressed to you—a voice which, if disregarded but this once, you may never hear again. Listen to

the voice which now entreats you in the name of God, and of Christ, and of all that is dear to you through eternity, to be reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, to repent and be converted, before you venture to go to sea again. Begin, even now, thus earnestly to pray, "Lord save; we perish." Yield yourselves up to his grace and guidance; and begin to live to his glory. Thus, when the time of sailing comes round again, you will go to sea, not indeed with the fool-hardy boasting and profane merriment so unbecoming in those who have only a plank between them and eternity, but with the rational, calm, cheerful, Christian courage of those who trust in the Lord, and who feel that, whatever may happen during the voyage, all will be well with them for ever.

## LECTURE XLII.

LUKE VIII. 26-31.

“And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. 27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. 28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. 29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains, and in fetters: and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) 30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. 31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. 32. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. 33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. 34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. 35. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 36. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. 37. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear. And he went up into the ship, and returned back again. 38. Now the man, out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39. Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.”

MATTHEW and Mark both give us an account of this miracle, the former at the end of his 8th chapter, and the latter at the beginning of his 5th. Our Lord and his disciples, having, as we had occasion to consider in our last Lecture, passed over the Lake of Gennesaret, called also the Sea of Galilee, or of Tiberias, during which passage the tempest was miraculously stilled, “*arrived at*” that part of the coast opposite to Galilee, here called by Luke, as it is by Mark, “*the country of the Gadarenes.*” This appears to have been the same, or part of the same, country, which is called by Matthew “the country of the Gergesenes,” or, as the word is in the Old Testament, *Girgashites*. This terri-

tory is said to have belonged to the half tribe of Manasseh, and to have been afterwards called Trachonitis.

When Jesus had gone ashore, "*there met him out of the city (of Gadara) a certain man who had devils*"—who was afflicted with a demoniacal possession. Matthew says that there met Christ "two men possessed with devils." Though there may be an apparent, there is no real, contradiction here. There were doubtless two men; but Mark and Luke mention only one of them—the one, we must suppose, who was the speaker on the occasion, and the more remarkable of the two; and what he spoke he spoke both for himself, and for the other. Somewhat in this way it is, that certain things which were spoken by one of the disciples, Peter, for example, are represented as spoken by the disciples in general, and that Matthew speaks of both the malefactors reviling Christ, and Luke only of one of them.

Having taken occasion to defend the commonly received opinion as to the literal sense of demoniacal possessions, when considering the case of the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue, mentioned in the 4th chapter, we shall now only remark, on that point, that the minutely circumstantial account here given of this case, is such as must have confirmed the Jews in their literal idea of possessions, and as cannot now but with the most unjustifiable violence be made to bear any other meaning. This will abundantly appear as we proceed.

Observe, here, that this was a very dreadful case. Various aggravating circumstances are stated. It was of long standing; the man had "*had devils long time.*" The inveteracy of the case rendered it more hopeless. The violence of the possession further appeared from such circumstances as these,—"*He ware no clothes:*" they could not prevail on him to go properly clad; but he tore his clothes, and went about naked, or almost naked. "*Neither abode he in any house, but in the tombs;*" he not only fled from his own house, but shunned every human dwelling, and took shelter in the tombs. Their sepulchres, or burying-places, in the East, were generally caves dug into the earth, or into the sides of rocks and rising grounds, in places set apart for the purpose, and without the towns. These sepulchres were usually closed with a flat stone laid on their mouth. As some of them were sometimes left open, or in a state easy of access, they then afforded a lurking-place for robbers, and a place of shelter for wretched and houseless outcasts. Such a place



of tombs was, no doubt, a retreat which well suited the gloomy disposition of this demoniac.

We may here take in the further description of his dismal case, in the latter part of the 29th verse: "*Oftentimes it had caught him*"—the satanic influence had come on him with extraordinary violence. On such occasions, his friends, or others, had endeavoured to restrain him, but in vain: "*he was kept bound in chains, and in fetters*"—(the former word signifies chains for the hands, and the latter chains for the feet);\* "*and he brake the bands,*" both these kinds of chains, "*and was driven of the devil into the wilderness;*"—though he frequently resorted to the tombs, he sometimes ran wild into the common, or waste country. His superhuman strength enabled him to burst asunder all bands, and to make his escape. Matthew says that the men, coming out of the tombs, "*were exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.*" And Mark gives this, even still more terrible, account of the more furious of the two: "*He had his dwelling among the tombs: and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.*"

Exceeding fierce, however, as he was, and untamable as he was by man, his violence soon fell before the presence of the Son of God. Verse 28: "*When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him.*" He was constrained to fall down, and do homage to him, before whom the devils believe and tremble. "*With a loud voice he said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high?*" The devil could not have anything to do with Christ as a Saviour, and he did not desire to have anything to do with him in any way; and yet, in spite of himself, he had to do with him as his Lord and Judge. This testimony to the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus, though it came from the father of lies, was a true testimony; and it was a glorious evidence to the divinity of the Saviour, as it came from that great enemy, who, however he might labour to deceive men, was quite capable of judging, and constrained, in this case, to declare the truth.—" *I beseech thee, torment me not,*" added he. He entreated a continuance of partial respite from that extreme suffering

\* ἀλυσισι καὶ πιδαις.

which he well knew awaited him at last. That this was the meaning, appears from the question of alarm recorded by Matthew : "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" This question was spoken in such a manner, and had such a distinct reference to the fate awaiting the fallen angels, that it could not possibly have been suggested by mere lunacy, and plainly indicated, if words have any meaning, the actual presence and agency of devils. The evangelist now states a circumstance which he had not introduced in the order of time, namely, that our Lord had "*commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man,*" previous to his expressing himself to the effect just mentioned. The demoniac, feeling that the command must be obeyed, had time, notwithstanding, to put in the forementioned request. And not only so, but, before the actual dispossession, "*Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name?*" He who knew all things, could not request an answer to remove any ignorance of his own; but the question was intended and contrived, to elicit important information, for the benefit of men. And the unclean spirit, using the man's organs of speech, "*answered, saying* (according to Mark), "My name is Legion; for we are many:" or, as in Luke, he said, "*Legion: because many devils were entered into him.*" A legion was a body of Roman soldiers, not always consisting of the same number, though conveying the idea, pretty nearly, of a particular number. As we might say of a regiment of soldiers with us, that it consists of a thousand men, more or less; so we may say of the Roman legion, that it contained six thousand men, more or less. From this question and its answer, we may infer that the fallen angels have proper names; that they are orderly (we read, indeed, of their prince, and of the devil and his angels); that they are arrayed in rebellion against God; and that they are very numerous and powerful. If so many evil spirits as deserved to be called a legion, were associated on this one occasion, their number altogether must be very great, and the subject relating to them must, as considered in itself, appear very alarming.

Luke tells us, in the 31st verse, and, changing the mode of description from the singular to the plural number, that the devils "*besought Christ that he would not command them to go out into the deep.*" The word in our language, which corresponds exactly with the original word here rendered "the deep," is, "the abyss." The word signifies the bottomless place; and is used here as in other places, for hell, or the

bottomless pit. It is the same word which is rendered "the bottomless pit" in the 9th, 11th, 17th, and 20th chapters of the Revelation. In 2 Pet. ii. 4, we read, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." And in Jude, 6th verse: "The angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Taking these two passages in connexion with what we read here and elsewhere, of the agency of evil spirits on earth; and especially, considering what is said, in the Revelation, of the old serpent, the devil, or Satan, being at one time bound, and cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up, and at another time "loosed out of his prison:" it appears that, though these fallen spirits are generally confined, yet some of them are occasionally permitted to go forth, and then remanded to prison; and that their final and universal imprisonment, and heaviest punishment, will take place at the day of judgment. These evil spirits, here at large, besought Christ that he would not immediately send them down to hell, but allow them to remain for some time on earth. According to Mark, the unclean spirit besought Christ much "that he would not send them away out of the country;" expressing a wish to continue, not only on earth, but in the particular region where they then were. There are some who, noticing what is said in the 10th chapter of Daniel, are of opinion that there are certain of the holy angels particularly concerned in the affairs of certain countries, under the direction of Michael their prince, or some other leader; and also, certain of the fallen angels, under Satan their prince. Alluding to this opinion, and speaking of the evil spirits mentioned in this passage, Doddridge has this note: "These, who perhaps were spirits of distinguished abilities, might be appointed to reside hereabouts, to oppose as much as possible the beneficial designs of Christ; and having made their observations on the characters and circumstances of the inhabitants, they might be capable of doing more mischief here than elsewhere, and on that account might desire leave to continue on the spot."

While this was passing, there happened to be within their sight, though a good way off from them, "*an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain.*" Mark tells us that "they were about two thousand." The devils, knowing that Christ's permission was necessary, and that they were entirely subject

to his restraint, "*besought him that he would suffer them to enter into the swine.*" In this request, they were, probably, influenced by a propensity to do mischief, and by the expectation of prejudicing the Gadarenes against Christ by the loss of property they would sustain. Our Lord permitted the devils to do as they had requested, saying unto them, "Go." "*Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine,*" &c. ; such was the maddening power they exerted, that "*the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked*" in the waters. This most extraordinary and tremendous result proves, beyond a doubt, that the possession was literal, and that the dispossession was a real and miraculous dispossession, without any deceit or collusion.

The result of the miracle which our Lord now performed, cannot but strike the attentive reader as very different from the usual result of his miracles. His miracles were commonly miracles of kindness, in every sense—miracles by which even the temporal situation of men was much improved: but here the result was a great loss of property to the inhabitants of the country. At the same time, there was nothing in this to justify the insinuation of cruelty and injustice which infidels have sometimes thrown out; on the contrary, all this was a display of justice, wisdom, and mercy, on the part of our Lord. Not to insist on the distinction between the mere permission, and the actual agency, in this case—(a just and important distinction, however, else how could the character of God be vindicated in his permission of any moral evil?) though our Lord had destroyed this herd himself, and without any diabolical agency, he would have been perfectly justifiable in so doing; for this loss, be it observed, was a righteous punishment of the Gadarenes for their profane and illegal conduct in keeping such animals at all. Swine, you will be aware, were reckoned among the unclean animals by the law of Moses; and the Jews were positively prohibited from eating of their flesh. Their having them was, at least, a temptation to eat them: their keeping them at all, their breeding them, though it were only for the purpose of gain by selling them to Gentiles, was certainly inconsistent, if not with the letter, at least with the spirit, of the divine law; and in fact, there were enactments of the Jewish rulers,\* declaring the keeping of swine to be infamous and illegal. The Gadarenes, then, were justly punished on this occasion. Moreover, when we take into view the whole

\* See proofs of this in Lightfoot's *Horse* on Matt. viii. 30.

of this history—the merciful deliverance of the demoniacs, the illustration of the dignity and divine mission of Christ, and the influence which the miracle, with its accompaniments, ought to have had on the Gadarenes, and which it is still calculated to have on all who read it, in leading to saving faith and godly fear—we must perceive that there is here no exception to the usual beneficial tendency of Christ's miracles, but that this too is a miracle of kindness.

When the swine-feeders "*saw what was done,*" how the demoniacs were delivered, and the herd destroyed, "*they fled, and went and told it in the city,* that is, in the town of Gadara, "*and in the*" adjacent "*country.*" On this, many of the people "*went out to see*" what had happened, and to satisfy themselves by personal observation and inquiry. When they "*came to Jesus, they found the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus,*" in the calm posture of an humble disciple, listening to his instruction. In the East, the custom was, and still is, for the teacher to take his station in a central position, with the scholars seated on the ground, in a semicircle: of course, the scholars, while learning, would be literally at his feet; and we easily perceive how this way of speaking was adopted. Paul says that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, to intimate that he had been educated by Gamaliel. In the passage under consideration, the attitude may convey, in addition to this, the idea of deep gratitude, reverence, and worship. And whereas formerly, the man tore his garments from off his body, and was in a state of complete frenzy, now they found him decently "*clothed, and in his right mind,*" restored to his senses and composed. When they beheld this, "*they were afraid;*" they were filled with that alarming amazement which usually comes on the irreligious at the consciousness of the presence of Deity, and the display of divine power. When they further learned, from those who had been present, all the particulars of the dispossession, and also of the destruction of the herd by the agency of the ejected demons, they were still more alarmed. "*Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about,*" together with the whole inhabitants of the city of Gadara, who are expressly mentioned by Matthew as coming out to meet Christ, and putting up this request—instead of being rejoiced at the presence of so glorious a person, and beseeching him to remain with them, that they might learn of him the way of life eternal; preferring their worldly and sordid gain to the good of their

souls, grieved and offended at the loss which they had already sustained, and afraid of additional judgments, blindly, ungratefully, and basely, "*besought him to depart from them,*" or, as it is expressed by the other evangelists, "to depart out of their coasts"—to leave their country altogether. This wicked request he, in just judgment, complied with, and immediately went on board the ship, to return to the other side of the lake.

Very different was the desire of the man for whom the gracious deliverance was wrought. When he saw Jesus about to cross over, he proposed to accompany him, and "*besought him that he might be*" allowed to continue "*with him;*"—influenced, no doubt, both by gratitude for the past, and by a concern for his safety and benefit for the future. Jesus, however, being the best judge of what in such circumstances was most becoming, and best adapted to promote the great design which he had ever in view, did not allow the man to accompany him, but "*sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published*" not only to his own house, but "*throughout the whole city,*" nay, according to Mark, in all Decapolis—a region in which (as the word signifies) were ten cities—"how great things *Jesus had done for him.*" The people, knowing his former wretched condition, marvelled at the great change effected on him.\* Thus, this most miserable, most dreaded, and most abhorred man, became, by divine power and grace, the most interesting and useful person in all the country. He continued a living demonstration of the Saviour's power and mercy, and a constant preacher, so to speak, of his fame; and we may believe that he was the means of gaining for Christ and his disciples a more favourable reception with some of the people, when they next visited those regions.

In reconsidering this part of sacred history, with a view to our own edification, in the present circumstances of the world, it may be observed,

1. *That we see, in this miserable demoniac, a striking picture of every man who is under the influence of Satan, in the spiritual sense.* It is true that Satan, though he may influence the human body in a way of which we are not aware, is not now permitted to take possession of men in the same known and obvious way as formerly in the days of Christ. But let us beware of the infidel and profane sentiment and conduct of the modern Sadducees, who say that

\* Mark.

there is neither angel nor spirit, good or bad, who look on the idea of Satan as a mere personification of moral evil;\* and who, instead of being roused to holy jealousy at the very thought of the devil, interlard their wicked conversation with his name, and consider the mention of his name as a proof of wit in themselves, and a call for merriment in others. The fact is, that those who think and speak lightly of the great enemy of God and man, have generally no scruple to profane the name of God himself, and are destitute of any proper impression of the evil of sin, and of the nature and the importance of salvation. They err, most egregiously, if any regard be due to the Word of God. The references in Scripture to the personal existence and agency of the devil, as the head of a multitude of apostate angels, are most express and very numerous. Satan is spoken of as "going to and fro throughout the earth," and as "going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." Those who are living in sin are represented as encouraged in it by him, and are spoken of as "taken captive by him at his will." In a way which cannot be exactly understood or explained, he entices them to iniquity. He sinks them in sin, which is the uncleanness of the soul. All who are "dead in trespasses and sins" (and this includes all who "walk according to the course of this world," and, of course, all who are in their natural state), are described as walking "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The external symptoms of the demoniacal possession at Gadara may have been more shocking than are now those of most enslaved sinners, but this can hardly be said as to the reality of the case. In all cases their state is dismal in itself—in some it is peculiarly horrid in the mode of its development. Was this demoniac neither to be bound nor tamed? and do not sinners often throw off all the restraints of reason and religion, and shame, and their friends, and human authority, and proceed desperately in their career of iniquity? Do not they "take counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us?" Was this demoniac driven by the devil, from the abodes of men, into the tombs and the wilderness?—and does he not still drive the abandoned away from all intercourse with God, and good society, into the haunts of corruption, and the wastes of the world? Do not

\* See Lecture on Luke iv. 1-13.

sinners still, like this unclean spirit, say to Christ, if not in words, yet in the tenor of their wishes and actions, "What have we to do with thee?" Do they not desire to be let alone, and to continue as they are? Do not they desire to remain without the reach of the light, lest it should torment them, lest it should disturb them in their career, and make them melancholy? Was this demoniac reduced to a state of complete lunacy, so as to be a terror to others, and a torment to himself?—who are so mad as they who, in their mental delirium, mistake entirely their true interest, do all they can to spread moral ruin around them, and, in defiance of every remonstrance, rush headlong on their own perdition? So varied and numerous are the evil propensities which agitate them, that it may be truly said, Their name is Legion, for they are many. Even when the outward manifestations are not very striking, the inward sway of the wicked one may be complete; for he cunningly adapts his mode of procedure to the different turns of his deluded and degraded subjects. And, though this demoniac was happily delivered from Satan's sway, he always seeks the utter ruin of men's souls and bodies; and it is truly terrible to think that, in his destruction of the herd of swine, there is furnished an appalling emblem of the end to which he is driving all his vassals, and of the perdition into which he will actually precipitate them, if they continue to give themselves up to his dominion. He will destroy them in a lake—even "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Now, seeing these things are so, ought you not all anxiously to inquire whether you be in the spiritual sense, delivered from Satan, or not? If you are practically slaves to known sin, you ought to conclude, at once, that you are his captives. And if you are merely in a careless state, you ought to come to the same conclusion, for he is only managing you in a quieter way. Do not conclude that you are delivered, merely because you may have felt some convictions and terrors. This unclean spirit could fall down before Christ, and deprecate his wrath; and yet he continues an unclean spirit still. The devils believe the coming wrath, and tremble. Extorted cries for deliverance from the abyss are not enough, though, probably, few of you go even so far as that. You must desire and obtain freedom from the guilt and power of sin itself, in God's own way—that is, by faith in the atonement of Christ, and the regenerating grace of his Spirit; you must obtain pardon and holiness, else your misery, though it



may he delayed for a time, will come at last. Think not that you can resist the authority of the Judge of all. When a whole legion of rebellious spirits, every one of them naturally more powerful than you, were fain to yield him trembling submission, well may the most stout-hearted of you be afraid. Safe and happy are they, and they only, who are "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son."

2. Let us, from this subject, *mark with satisfaction, the ability and readiness of Christ to control and to destroy the power of Satan.* It seems likely that, if it had not been for the restraint of divine power, these malicious spirits would have destroyed, not only the property, but the lives, of the Gadarenes; and we may remark, in general, that we ought always to feel indebted to the Lord for the protection we enjoy from the malice of evil spirits. Considering the outward protection afforded by Providence, and by the employment of holy angels, we have no occasion to be too much alarmed by the fear of Satan. Fierce and terrific as these unclean spirits were to others, they were calm before our Lord, and departed at his command. And so it will be always. We should remember, too, that in the most important sense, including our spiritual deliverance, "the Son of God was manifested for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

"He spoiled principalities, and powers, making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them in his cross:" and with this great and decisive victory is connected the final triumph of all his people. Satan may sift them as wheat; but the Saviour prays for them, that their faith fail not. Satan may tempt them to sin, but he cannot force them; nay, they are secured against his attacks so far as they shall not prove fatal. Though they wrestle, not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places; yet, being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and taking unto them the whole armour of God, they shall be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And, as this is very encouraging to those who are already delivered from the power of darkness, so it is, if properly considered, very encouraging for those who are yet under that power, to hope and to strive for deliverance, through Jesus' name, and in his strength. No man need say, or think, that he is "sold to do iniquity," or that his

case is hopeless, if he will only apply to Christ for deliverance. Though the devil, like a strong man, keep the palace of the heart, Jesus is a stronger than he, to overcome him, to take from him all his armour wherein he trusts, and to divide his spoils. Let this be well considered by those who are under his bondage, and then "peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

3. *There are various traits in the character of the Gadarenes, in which we ought carefully to guard against resembling them.* For example, their covetousness, which led them to pursue gain in an illegal and disreputable way. When men addict themselves supremely to filthy lucre, there is no meanness, or worthlessness, of which they will not be guilty. Let us also guard against preferring, like them, our worldly gain to the good of our souls, the prosperity of the Gospel, and the overthrow of Satan's kingdom. As they seem to have imputed their loss to Christ, and not to the evil spirits, and as it has been common for Infidels to throw on Christianity itself the odium of those calamities of which wicked men and Satan have made it the innocent occasion; let us reject every sentiment of this kind, remembering that many more and much heavier mischiefs would have arisen, had the restraints of Christianity been removed, and giving the praise and blame where they are respectively due. Especially, let us guard against the spirit which influenced the Gadarenes, when they besought Christ to depart out of their coasts. This was truly a diabolical spirit; and this request proved them to be, though in a different form, yet as much under the influence of Satan, as were the poor demoniacs. Perhaps the closest resemblance to this which has been exhibited in our times, is to be found in some who, having gone abroad from Christian countries into heathen lands for mere worldly reasons, have, in order that they might be left to pursue their ungodly gains and swinish pleasures undisturbed, set themselves to oppose the introduction of Christianity, and, in as far as they could, to rid the country altogether of Christ and his faithful preachers. It is reason of thankfulness that the progress of light has now rendered this display of enmity against the gospel more rare, and shamed many of its opposers into silence. Something of this spirit, however, in reference to their own case, is natural to all unrenewed men; "they say unto God,

Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Let all such remember that the Gadarenes were punished by Christ by being granted their request. Nor may it be altogether irrelevant to remark, that the Gadarenes, as a community, were, in the righteous judgment of God, signally punished, as for their sins in general, so in particular, for their rejection of Christ; for Josephus, who describes Gadara as a place of considerable importance, relates that it was the first town which, after suffering dreadful hardships, was taken by the Roman army, in the fatal war of Vespasian.\* Direful, however, as was that calamity, it will be far surpassed by the ruin which, at the last day, shall overtake those to whom, as they persevered all their time on earth in saying to Christ, "Depart from us," he will then say, "Depart from me."

Finally. *The situation and conduct of this man, after he was dispossessed, are very instructive as to the state and duty of the converted.* Did the unclean spirit go out of the body of this man?—so, Satan loses his paramount influence over the souls of the converted, the Saviour is enthroned in their hearts, and always, when they resist the devil, he flees from them. Was this man found sitting at the feet of Jesus?—so also Mary "sat at his feet, and heard his words;" and so it is the delight of all his true disciples to wait on him, in an humble, reverential, and inquiring posture of mind. Was this man delivered from his frenzy, and restored to his right mind?—so, whatever may be imagined to the contrary, it is when sinners become believing, holy, and deeply serious, that they cease to be foolish, and become truly rational and sober. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding." Paul says of himself, and all true believers, "God hath given us"—"the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Did this man desire to remain with Christ?—so it is the desire of all his people to be much with him in his ordinances, and to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." This they are allowed to be, and to do, in a good measure. But they have various duties to attend to; and in particular, as the man, according to Christ's direction, returned, and showed to his house, and fellow-citizens, and fellow-countrymen, the great things which the Lord had done for him, so all Christians are, more or less, useful to their friends, and to society at large;

\* Josephus' Jewish Wars, Book iv.

and it not unfrequently happens that some who, in the days of their ignorance and folly, were noted for their opposition to religion, become, by the converting grace of God, peculiarly useful, and like Onesimus, though "in time past unprofitable, yet now profitable" to many. Indeed, a chief reason why men are not generally taken immediately to heaven after their conversion, seems to be, that their continuance on earth may manifest the power of divine grace, and promote the cause of religion in the world. See here, then, Christians, your pleasing duty. Show how great things the Lord hath done for you. Show this, on proper occasions, by a simple, humble, and grateful statement in words. Say, with the Psalmist, "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." Show this, especially, by the silent yet eloquent language of a holy, charitable, and devoted life. Seek to be much with Christ in the enjoyment of public and private religious exercises: yet be ready to deny yourselves, even as to these, when, by so doing, you are called on, by the voice of providence, to promote the good of others. Live, in every respect, as it becomes the spiritually emancipated and redeemed; and consecrate, with hearty goodwill, and with all your might, to the glory of your Saviour, those powers which he has rescued from a state of bondage, perversion, and degradation, and renovated for the noble service and blissful enjoyment of himself.

## LECTURE XLIII.

LUKE VIII. 40-56.

“And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. 41. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: 42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying. (But as he went the people thronged him. 43. And a woman, having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44. Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. 45. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 46. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. 47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and, falling down before him, she declared unto him, before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately, 48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.) 49. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. 50. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. 51. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. 52. And all wept, and bewailed her; but he said, Weep not; she is not dead but sleepeth. 53. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 54. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. 55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. 56. And her parents were astonished; but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.”

OUR Lord, having dispossessed the demoniacs at Gadara, left the country, at the request of its unbelieving and worldly inhabitants, and crossed over the lake to Galilee, whence he had lately come. There the people, awakened, at least in some degree, by his former instructions and miracles, were anxiously waiting for him, and gladly received him on his arrival. And is not this the posture of mind which at this moment becomes us? Now that we are again in the place in which he is wont to come unto his people and bless them, ought we not to be waiting for, and

ready to welcome, his gracious spiritual presence?—From Matthew's account, it seems that certain things occurred after our Lord's return, on which, however, as they are not stated here by Luke, we shall not enter. The passage now read describes two miracles, the account of which is interwoven by this evangelist, as it also is by Matthew and Mark.

The first miracle here described is that of the restoration of Jairus' daughter to life. As the only mention of this man occurs in the history of this miracle, we know nothing more of him than what is gathered from this source. Jairus is the Old Testament, Hebrew, name, Jair, with the Greek termination added by Mark and Luke; and the name signifies, my light, or, who enlightens, or, is enlightened. This "*Jairus*" was "*a ruler of the synagogue.*" The rulers of the synagogues presided in the government, and directed the worship, in the synagogues; and they also acted as local magistrates, subordinate to the Sanhedrim, or great council of Seventy, which sat in Jerusalem. There appear to have been generally several of them connected with each synagogue, though one of these was the chief. The synagogue here meant, must have been the synagogue in Capernaum, where Jesus now was. Matthew informs us, in the first verse of his 9th chapter, that when Jesus had passed over the lake, he "came into his own city:" now, we are to recollect that, though he spent his early years in Nazareth, and was therefore called Jesus of Nazareth, yet it is stated, in Matt. iv. 13, "that leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast."

A person of note and of worth, as Jairus was, he was not, however, exempt from trouble, but was visited with a severe domestic trial. His daughter, and what added greatly to the affliction, his only daughter, and what was even more trying still, his "*only daughter,*" after she had reached the age of "*twelve years,*" and had, of course, made much progress, and become peculiarly interesting and dear to him, so that to her continuance with him he was looking forward as the chief comfort of his remaining days on earth, was grievously ill, and "*lay a-dying.*" In this most anxious conjuncture, Jairus, wisely and happily, be-thought himself of applying to Jesus, whose powerful and gracious works he had heard of, and, probably, partly witnessed. Coming to him, "*he fell down at Jesus' feet,*" in deep humility, or as it is in Matthew, "worshipped him:"

"and besought him that he would come into his house." According to Matthew, Jairus said, "My daughter is even now dead" (that is, she was in the last extremity, and given over, when he left the house, and he considered her the same as dead); "but come, and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." Matthew also says that "Jesus arose" (for, it appears that he was sitting in a house, probably in Matthew's house), "and followed him," that is, Jairus, and "so did his disciples." Our Lord readily complied with the ruler's request, and set out immediately for his house. But we must suspend our further consideration of this part of the history, till we consider the very interesting event which occurred by the way.

"As he went the people thronged him." While they were crowding around, and anxious to see what would be the result of the ruler's application, a poor woman, who had been, for a long time, even "*twelve years*," afflicted with "*an issue of blood*;" who "had suffered a great deal from many physicians,"\* by painful restraints and disagreeable medicines; and who "*had spent all her living upon physicians, and yet could not be healed of any*"—who "was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse"—"*came*" in the press, "*behind him, and touched the border of his garment.*" According to the divine law,† the Jews were directed to "make fringes in the borders of their garments," and to "put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue," "that they might look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." This seems to have been the part of our Lord's garment which this poor woman touched. We formerly read, in Luke vi. 19, *that*, "the whole multitude sought to touch Christ; for *there* went virtue out of him, and healed them all." It was publicly known, then, that many had been cured in this way; and this woman's knowledge of the fact led her to expect a cure accordingly. She, no doubt, betrayed much weakness in the way of her proceeding; for, it was folly to imagine that she could touch him without his knowledge, or that the mere touch could have efficacy of itself, without his special cognizance and voluntary agency. There was much, however, that was excellent, in her procedure. It discovered much humility, for it was as if she thought that she was unworthy to meet him in the face, and that all she ought to presume to do was to touch his garment from behind.

\* Mark v. 26.

† Numb. xv. 38.

There was also great faith in her case; for Matthew tells us, that "she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole:"—she was fully persuaded that she would be healed, if she could only get forward to touch his garment. Accordingly, Jesus graciously overlooked all her weakness, and vouchsafed her an instantaneous and complete cure. "*Immediately her issue of blood stanch'd,*" and she felt that she was healed of that distemper.

On this, Jesus turned round, and said, "*Who touched me?*" It was, not because he needed information, that he put the question; but it was that he might draw forth a confession from the woman, and consult the advancement of his own blessed cause among the people. "*When all denied*"—when none would confess that they had touched Christ, at least with any particular design, "*Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?*"—how is it possible, in such circumstances, but that many must touch thee? Jesus, however, would not rest satisfied with this reply, but said, "*Somebody hath touched me,*"—and that too with an important object in view;—"for I perceive that virtue," that is, healing power, divine energy, "*has gone out of me,*" or proceeded forth from me. Jesus was looking round again to discover the person, and probably directing his eye to the woman; and "*when the woman saw that she was not hid,*" (how indeed could she be hid from him who knew what is in man, who needed not that any should testify to him, who knew all things?) "*she came trembling,*" afraid, probably, that he would be offended by her having presumed to touch him, when she was ceremonially unclean, and also by her having obtained a cure in a surreptitious manner: "*and falling down before him,*" "she told all the truth,"\*—"she declared unto him before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately." Our blessed Saviour, instead of expressing displeasure, spoke to her in the most kind and consolatory way. He addressed her by the affectionate appellation of "*Daughter,*" he exhorted her to "*be of good comfort,*" he told her that "*her faith,*" which he noticed with approbation, had instrumentally "*made her whole,*" and he dismissed her, with the gracious words, "*Go in peace.*" It was indeed a great deliverance which was conferred on her, when she was healed of a disease which, by ceremonial prohibi-

\* Mark.



tion, cut her off from the public services of religion, and which was wasting her body, and would soon have brought her to the grave: when, however, we consider all the favourable features in her case, and especially the way in which Christ addressed her, we cannot but trust that a greater deliverance still was conferred on her—that through faith she was delivered from the spiritual pollution of sin, and introduced into a state of acceptance, and peace with God.

Before leaving this miracle, let us consider some of the lessons which it reads to us. We may observe, then, that the afflicted state of this poor, diseased woman, should remind us that we are all individually *exposed to various painful, and fatal bodily disorders*, because of our departure from God. Let the consideration of this fact make us humble and serious; and let it, especially, lead us so to view, and to improve the scriptural representation of the cause of our exposed condition, as that we may return to the Lord.

Let us also, from this case, be reminded of the *distinction between the province of the physician and the province of God*. This woman was not to be blamed for applying to physicians for aid; nay, she would have been to blame, if she had neglected this; but she was blamable, if, as seems to have been the case, she resorted to physicians, with excessive anxiety, and to the exclusion of a proper regard to the providence and power of the Most High. It is this which is marked against Asa,\* when it is said: “Asa was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.” Let us ever look to God, then, even for bodily healing; and let this history teach us that, as in other things, so in the cure of diseases, what is impossible with man is possible with God.

But let us also *improve this miracle figuratively and spiritually*. More dreadful and more defiling than any disease to the body, is sin to the soul. Under the influence of this disease all men are born, and with some it is of long standing. As ceremonial uncleanness cut off Jews from the services of the temple, and from free intercourse with men; so this abominable thing separates from the enjoyment of God, and from the fellowship of the saints. When under its power, men may, indeed, be now bodily present in the house of God, but their souls can hold no communion with him. This disease impairs, and if not checked, must destroy, the whole man.

Again, we are reminded, that when the existence of this

\* 2 Chron. xvi. 12.

spiritual disease forces itself on men's notice, they are *too apt to have recourse to inadequate means of cure*. They are ready to mistake the means altogether; or to rest in the proper means, to the neglect of the great Agent. It is astonishing, and melancholy, to think of the aversion many discover to the true method of salvation. In order to allay their fears, some have recourse to amusements, others to engrossing worldly cares, and others to intemperance; but all in vain, for their fears soon return with double strength. Others, with some appearance of attention to the true way of life and peace, have recourse to good resolutions, to external duties, to mortifications, and to various forms of self-righteousness. Yet, all these persons, notwithstanding all these expedients, are spiritually nothing bettered, but rather worse. They will do any thing rather than apply to Christ; and it is only when all other trials fail that they will try him. All other medicines but the blood of Christ, however, and all other spiritual physicians but Christ himself, are medicines and physicians "of no value."

But, further, this case shows that *no sinner, however inveterate his case may be, need despair of a cure*, if he will apply to Christ, in faith. "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."—"His blood cleanses from all sin;" and he is "set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

Consider these things well, all of you. Consider these things, you who have no suitable concern about your spiritually diseased state, and no suitable desire for deliverance from it. When your bodies are sick, how anxious do you become! what pains and expense do you undergo to obtain relief! If nothing else would do, you would give up any thing for recovery. "Skin upon skin," one piece of valuable property after another, "nay, all that you have, would you give for your life." And yet then your recovery would be uncertain; for you might become worse and worse, and die after all. Here, however, the disease is far more dreadful; and a cure, a certain cure, may be had, without money and without price. Be no longer, then, so infatuated as to remain insensible to the disease which is preying on you; but come, as perishing sinners, to the great Physician of souls. We are borne out by the spirit of this passage in saying to you: Come, come now; come as you are; come with all your uncleanness and all your weakness; come any way, rather than not come at all.

And now, the pleasing idea presents itself, that in the crowd, who have come hither to see Jesus, so to speak, and who are thronging around, there may be some individual who is groaning under the burden of spiritual disease, and anxious to approach Christ, that he may take it away. A welcome to thee, thou heavy laden soul! a welcome, in the name of Him who healed and saved this poor woman. Thy case may not be thought of by those around thee, and no human being may be aware of the thoughts which are passing in thy mind, or of the object thou hast in view. But adhere to thy purpose, and hesitate not to put it into execution. Come now, approach, and touch the Saviour. Art thou ready to say, "I know that if I but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole; and if I could only see him, and get near him, quickly and gladly would I stretch out my trembling hand: but I see him not—I see him not as once he appeared in Capernaum's synagogue, or passed along its streets, surrounded by the admiring throng—I see not his flowing robe with the border, nor his fringe with the ribband of blue?"—Nay, but say not so, for thou thyself knowest better. It is the bringing of thy mind in contact, by faith, with gospel truth as it is in Christ, of which we are speaking; and this is as practicable now as ever. Jesus is not visible in our assembly, or on our streets; but his glorious character and finished work are described in his Word, and published in his preached Gospel. Take, then, for true the declarations of the God of truth. Rely on the grace of the Saviour. Touch his garment thus, and virtue will go forth from him to heal thee. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach); "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

For the encouragement and direction of believers, the following things may be merely noticed, as suggested by this miracle. There is virtue in every thing that relates to Christ; there is an efficacy in every part of his character; it being with him as it was with Aaron, of whom it is said, that the sacred oil poured on his head descended even to the skirts of his garment. We learn, too, here, that while there are different degrees of faith, and Christ is most honoured by the strongest, yet he does not reject the weakest. Again, we see that from whatever cause trembling may come

on believers, they cannot do better than cast themselves at his feet, and tell him the whole truth. It is surely pleasant, also, to think that all his believing people, whatever be their progress, are regarded by him as his sons and daughters. And finally, they are here reminded that they ought not to seek to conceal their obligations to his grace, but are called on so to speak and act, that it may be seen that virtue has proceeded from him to heal them, and that men may "take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus."

But let us proceed to the sequel of the other miracle, for this passage is a complication of wonders. The miracle performed on this poor woman, though it may have delayed our Lord in his progress for a short time, must have had an animating effect on the expectations of Jairus, in reference to his daughter. But while Jesus was thus speaking to the woman, "*there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master*"—for so they respectfully styled our Lord. Whether this intelligence altogether destroyed the hope of Jairus, or not, does not certainly appear, though fear was arising in his mind; it is manifest, however, that this messenger, and those who accompanied him (for there appear, from Mark, to have been others with him), however they might have supposed that Christ might have prevented the death of the girl, had he arrived in time, had no idea of his restoring her to life, and therefore considered that to have asked him to go to the house now would have been to put him to useless trouble. "*But when Jesus heard it, he answered him,*" that is, he replied to what was passing in Jairus' mind, "*saying, Fear not*"—notwithstanding this intelligence, be not discouraged; "*believe only*"—believe in the miraculous power which I exercise—"and she shall be made whole"—she shall yet be restored, not only to life, but to perfect health. You must have observed that this kind of faith, or, more correctly, the belief of this kind of truth, the belief that Christ could and would perform the miracle, was generally required, on the part of the person to be wrought on, or of the person applying for another; and this seems to have been required, though not as absolutely necessary in the nature of things to a bodily cure, yet as a proper feeling and acknowledgment of our Lord's divine character.

Jesus now proceeded to Jairus' house; and, in doing so, he dismissed the crowd. "*And when he came into the*

house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden." Jairus, the father, was with him, as we have seen; and it would seem, from the statement of the circumstance of the mother going in with them, that she had met them near the house. Our Lord took a competent number of witnesses with him; and yet not so many as might be inconvenient in the house, or have the appearance of ostentation. The three disciples here mentioned had a similar distinction conferred on them, when they only, of all the twelve, were taken to be witnesses of our Lord's transfiguration and agony.

Verse 52: "*And all wept and bewailed her.*" According to Mark, when our Lord went in, "he saw the tumult, and them that wept, and wailed greatly;" and, according to Matthew, "he saw the minstrels," that is, musicians, or, still more literally, flute-players, "and the people making a noise." When death happened in a Jewish family, they were usually visited by their acquaintances, who came to condole with them; and they were also accustomed to send for persons who were professional mourners, and who being hired for the purpose, exerted themselves to express and excite grief. Of these, some set up dismal wailings with their voices, and others played melancholy airs on musical instruments. This practice prevailed so much among them at times, as to partake rather of heathenish than of truly religious manners.\* Various references to the employments of such hired mourners and musicians, on melancholy occasions, occur in Scripture. Thus in Jer. ix. 17: "Call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for the cunning women, that they may come; and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters."

When our Lord saw and heard all this dismal mourning, he said, "*Weep not;*" or, as in Mark, "Why make ye this ado, and weep?" Heavy as was the affliction, and even though the girl was supposed to have been irrecoverably gone, such abandoned and noisy grief was altogether unbecoming in those who professed to know the true God, and to entertain the hope of immortality. Especially in this case, when an almighty Deliverer stood by, and help might have been expected, and was coming, such conduct

\* The Greeks made a great noise with brazen vessels. The Romans made a prodigious noise with the voice (*Conclamatio*) for eight days; at the end of which period the phrase was used, *Conclamatum est*—It is all over.

ought not to have been. "Give place," added Christ; "retire, make way, that I may see her." "*She is not dead, but sleepeth.*" She was not dead so as to be irrecoverably lost to this world; her state, who was so soon to awake, might, even more naturally than in usual cases of death, be compared to a sleep. On this the mourners and others, knowing that she was really dead, in the usual sense of the expression, "*laughed him to scorn,*" were so rude and inconsiderate as to deride him; yet this unseemly conduct served as a confirmation of the reality of the miracle, and of its being an actual resurrection from the dead. Then our Lord having "*put them all out*"—that is, all those who, having derided him, showed themselves to be unworthy to witness such a sight—"taketh," as we are told by Mark, "the father and the mother of the damsel, and them," that is, the three disciples that were with him, "and entereth in where the damsel was lying." "*And he took her by the hand, and called, saying,*" in Syriac, "Talitha, Cumi; which is, being interpreted," "*Maid, arise.*" Without prayer, and in his own name, he gave the command; and the command being accompanied with his almighty power, was instantly obeyed. So, the call of the word to souls dead in sin, accompanied by his divine grace, becomes effectual; and so, at the last day, all the dead who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth. "*Her spirit came again.*" This form of expression is justly considered corroborative of the idea of souls living and acting in a state of separation from the body, and of their being again united to the body at the resurrection. Not only did her spirit come again, but "*she arose straightway;*" she was restored, not only to life, but to health, so as to be able to rise and walk. And, in further proof of her complete restoration, and also to show that though her life had been restored miraculously, it was to be sustained in the ordinary way, "*he commanded to give her meat.*" No wonder that "*her parents,*" and all present, "*were astonished.*" We may be sure, too, that her parents were filled with exceeding great joy. The report of such a miracle would, doubtless, get abroad; but, as his hour was not yet come, Jesus was studious to avoid furnishing his enemies prematurely with a handle against him; and, therefore, "*he charged*" those who were present "*that they should tell no man what was done.*"

And now, let the history of this miracle remind us that

all families are exposed to domestic trouble. Let none forget that into their tabernacle, in which nought but health is now seen, wasting disease may soon enter; and that there the sound of rejoicing may soon be changed into the voice of them that weep. An affectionate family is like the human body; "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." None can tell how soon they may be called to suffer heavily in this way; none have any security but that the nearest and dearest connection may soon be laid on the bed of sickness and of death. How much, then, does it concern all the members of every family, who are arrived at the age of accountableness, to be living in the faith of the gospel, and in the discharge of relative duty; so that, if a separation should take place, there may be good hope with regard to those who depart, and no bitter remorse on account of habitually neglected duty in those who remain!

This passage will be felt to be applicable, in a very exact and peculiarly affecting manner, to those parents who have one only daughter, and she arrived at some such interesting age as was that of Jairus' daughter. Such parents may have, as it were, their life bound up in the life of their child, and may be ready to say of her, in reference to coming years, "This same shall comfort us." But let them see to it that their affection be an enlightened, Christian affection, including a practical regard to the spiritual welfare of their daughter, and that their expectations from her be accompanied with a proper sense of the insufficiency and uncertainty of all created comforts, lest they find, when too late, that they have been leaning on a weak and brittle reed, which, in breaking, pierces them to the heart.

But not to pursue so close a parallel as this any further, we may say more generally that this history suggests much instruction to parents, in regard both to the sickness, and to the death, of advanced children. As it is right, when their children are dangerously ill, that they should feel a strong desire for the preservation of their life, let them here learn that, while they are to use proper natural means, they should call in the aid of divine power and grace. In the exercise of private and family prayer, they should fall down at Jesus' feet, and beseech him to come into their house. They should beseech him to come, in the exercise of his ordinary providential power, to recover the sick; and they should beseech him to come, in the enlightening, pardoning, sanctifying, and comforting influences of his grace, as to all

the members of the family, so especially to the afflicted object of their solicitude. If they proceed in this way, restoration to health, if it come (and this is the way in which it is most likely to come), will come as a blessing to all concerned; and, on the supposition of a fatal issue, their prayers for Christ's presence, and his gracious visit, will not be in vain; for they will be the means of enabling the dying to die in peace, and of forming the survivors to right views, and the proper improvement of the painful bereavement.

We say, too, that there is here much instruction to parents when they are bereaved of children. It cannot be but that nature must feel, and feel keenly, on such occasions; and it cannot have been the intention of Him who himself wept at the grave of Lazarus, entirely to prohibit the feeling and expression of grief in others; but it ought to be observed, that he decidedly disapproves of his people abandoning themselves to excessively noisy, or guilty, inconsolable grief. Such grief is known to be characteristic of heathens; but it is unworthy of Christians; and it has been, in fact, very much checked by the prevalence of Christian principles and hopes. Christians who are overwhelmed in this way, are indeed to be pitied; but they may justly consider themselves to be thus gently reprov'd by their Lord, "Why make ye this ado, and weep?" In all ordinary cases, death, when it comes, should be felt as settling the question of relative anxiety; it shows plainly what is the will of God; and they ought all to beware of indulging a feeling, or uttering an expression, of rebellion. The matter is then determined; and it is for believers to submit, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." David said, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Besides, extravagant grief is altogether unworthy of those who believe the doctrines, and entertain the hopes, of a glorious resurrection, and a blessed immortality. Of all who die in the Lord, it may still be said, in the sense our Saviour intended, that they are not dead, but sleep. They are not, indeed, to be restored immediately; but, we have only to look forward to the morning of the resurrection, to see them



awaking, even as to their bodies, to renewed life, and endless felicity. And what a consolation is this ! In the words of Paul to the Thessalonians—" I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others, who have no hope. For if believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."—" Wherefore comfort one another with these words." How great, in this view, the consolation of the Christian !

Faithfulness, however, requires the statement that none can scripturally partake of this consolation, but those who, through Christ, are in a state of acceptance with God, and conscientiously exerting themselves for the salvation of their relatives. With regard to those who either plainly die in sin, or even die without having given any evidence of grace ;—it is a most delicate point to speak of them at all,—and in most cases of the kind, probably the less that is said the better. But this we may say without hesitation, that, in every light in which we can possibly regard the death of ourselves, or of our friends, there may be seen the strongest reason for our seeking to become possessed of the privileges and character, that we may die the death, of the righteous, ourselves; and also for our doing every thing we can, by advice, example, and prayer, to make our friends such as, in the prospect of their death, the enlightened Christian would wish them to be. If we would avoid the most distressing reflections, and enjoy the best consolations, when those whom we love leave the world before us; and if we would save those whom we love, and are to leave behind us, the most painful apprehensions, and enable them, on rational and scriptural principles, to think of us with pleasure when we are gone;—let us all be wise in time. Let us thankfully avail ourselves of the pardoning and sanctifying grace provided for us in the gospel; let us encourage each other in the way of life; and let us seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, in the way of a patient continuance in well-doing.

## LECTURE XLIV.

## LUKE XI. 1-9.

“ Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. 3. And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, nor money ; neither have two coats apiece. 4. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. 5. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them. 6. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. 7. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him : and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead ; 8. And of some, that Elias had appeared ; and of others, that one of the old prophets had risen again. 9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded : but whom is this of whom I hear such things ? And he desired to see him.”

OUR Lord had now, for a considerable time, been diligently employed in going about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the kingdom of God, and healing all diseases among the people. He could not, however, in his human nature, be in more places than one, at a time ; so that his personal exertions were necessarily limited : he, therefore, formed the gracious design to institute means for the still more extensive and more rapid diffusion of the gospel. We learn, from the corresponding part of the history, as given by Matthew,\* that “ when Jesus saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he to his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few : pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” It is a promising sign that the Lord intends some signal mercy to his Church, when he stirs up believers to pray for it : and so it proved here. In fact, Christ had already certain men in training for the important work of public teachers, namely, the twelve. They had been called to discipleship in the early part of his ministry ; and we have

\* Matt. ix. 36.

seen a particular account of the calling of some of them. We found to, in the 6th chapter from the 13th verse, how he called unto him all his disciples, and from among them chose these twelve, whom he named apostles, that is, messengers. We there had a list of the names, and took occasion to give a short history of the lives, of the apostles. The 9th chapter, on which we are now entering, begins with an account of the actual mission of the apostles. You observe, Christ did not send them out to teach immediately after they became disciples, nor even immediately after they were selected for the apostleship. Mark\* says that Jesus "ordained twelve, that they might be with him;" that is, that they might wait constantly on him, have habitual communion with him, be present at his public preaching, and enjoy his private instructions; and thus be fully qualified for the work on which he was to send them.

"Then," says Luke, *"he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick."* The chief object of their mission was, "to preach the kingdom of God," as it is here expressed—to preach, to proclaim publicly, as heralds, the introduction of the gospel dispensation—to declare, according to the light they then possessed, that Messiah was come, and that salvation was to be obtained, and sought, only through faith in his name. And on this errand they were formally sent and commissioned by him. In subserviency to this great design, and in order, chiefly, to gain credit to what they were to preach, he bestowed on them "power," or energy, and official "authority," or right, to cast out devils, to heal diseases, and to work other miracles. All rightful authority, and all power in reference to temporal, and especially to spiritual things, emanate from Christ, who has the government on his shoulder; and the particular way in which, as we are here told, Christ gave this power to the apostles, is justly considered as a proof of his Godhead. When we consider the case, for example, of Moses and the seventy elders,† we find that, though Moses chose them out from among the people, it was not he who conferred their gifts upon them: but "the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and gave it unto the seventy elders." So also, though the apostles, as we read in the Acts,‡ communicated miraculous gifts to others, it was only instrumentally, and

\* Mark iii. 14.

† Numb. xi. 16-25.

‡ Acts viii. 15.

in the use of prayer to God, who was the true agent in bestowing the gifts. Here, however, without prayer, and without a reference to any agency but his own, Christ gave the apostles the miraculous power and authority. These he must, therefore, have had of himself; and, of course, he is God, equal with the Father.

From the parallel passage of Mark vi. 7, we learn that our Lord sent forth the twelve "by two and two." This must appear a wise and gracious arrangement, whether we regard the object of their mission, or their own interest and comfort. It rendered their testimony legally valid; for, at the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word must be considered as established. It consulted their own wants and infirmities, as they would be ready to assist and encourage each other. In the words of Ecclesiastes,\* "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." In like manner, our Lord afterwards sent out the seventy by two and two.

In giving an account of the mission of the twelve, Matthew, in his 10th chapter from the 5th verse, says that Jesus commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not"—(testifying against the schismatic conduct of the Samaritans, who were thus ranked with the Gentiles)—"but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The personal ministry of Christ, and the early labours of the apostles, were almost confined to the Jews. This was divinely ordered, for such reasons probably as these—that the Jews, who had the prophecies and types of the Old Testament, and who, of course, were, or ought to have been, the best judges, might be first appealed to for a decision in favour of Jesus' claim to the office of Messiah; that their prejudices against the Gentiles might not be too strongly opposed at once, but gradually done away; that a centre of operations might be established by the conversion of some of the Jews; and that their general and obstinate rejection of the gospel might prepare the way for its introduction among the Gentiles. After our Lord's resurrection, his instructions were these, that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem:" and Paul and Barnabas said to the contradicting and blaspheming

\* Eccles. iv. 9.

Jews, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."\*

Matthew also informs us that, after mentioning the miracles they were to perform, our Lord said to the apostles, "Freely ye have received, freely give." It is quite plain, from the sequel, that this did not prohibit the apostles from taking from those among whom they ministered what was needful for their support: but it strictly forbade them to take any reward for the exercise of the gift of miracles, in the way, either of particular acts, or of conferring that gift on others. Had a person, possessed of such power, been at liberty to receive money for its exercise, he might soon have enriched himself wonderfully. But, in obedience to the divine will, those who had this gift were careful not to make gain of it; so that disinterestedness is one of the marks of true miracles. Thus, though much urged, Elisha would take nothing from Naaman, whom he had miraculously cured of the leprosy; and Gehazi, the prophet's servant, was smitten with the same disease, as a punishment for asking and receiving a present at that time. Thus, too, Peter said to Simon, the sorcerer, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

Verse 3: "*And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.*" He directed them, in general, not to make any provision for their journey beforehand. Particularly, he ordered them not to take staves, that is, to be content with such a staff as they might have, and not seek another; for, in this parallel passage of Mark,† it is thus expressed that they were to take nothing "save a staff only." Nor were they to take a "scrip," or bag, for carrying articles in:—nor food, nor money, nor change of raiment. According to Matthew, they were not to have any kind of money in their "purses," or more literally, girdles, for it was usual for travellers to carry money in a fold of their girdles: "Neither shoes," that is, they were not to furnish themselves with strong shoes, but, as it is in Mark, were to be "shod with sandals." Neither were they to have changes of raiment. These directions implied that the par-

\* Luke xxiv. 47; Acts xiii. 46.

† Mark vi. 8.

ticular mission on which they were now sent was to be short—that they ought to trust in providence—and that they would find those who would be disposed, as they were in duty bound, to assist them. Our Lord did, indeed, himself distinctly state the chief reason of these directions, when he added, according to Matthew, “For the labourer is worthy of his meat.” The apostles found that they did not trust in Providence in vain; for, we thus read, in the 22d chapter of Luke, from the 35th verse, “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing.” The following verse, however, proves that these directions, to make no provision, were temporary, and that Christ wisely altered his instructions according to the altered state of affairs: “Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.”

We may here notice what our Lord said, as mentioned by Matthew: “And into whatsoever city, or town, ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide.” None of the inhabitants could have a worthiness of merit in the sight of God, or be possessed of any such dispositions as were spiritually good, or inclining them to the reception of the gospel, previously to the operation of divine grace on their hearts: some of them, however, might be, not only of reputable character in public estimation, but truly pious, benevolent, and believing children of God, according to their light. Therefore, though the apostles were to seek the salvation of all, they were prudently to make such inquiries as would enable them to avoid repairing to persons of bad character, which would have created a prejudice against them; and they were to ascertain who were justly in good esteem, that if they, on meeting with them, should, as was probable, ask them to their homes, they might accept the invitation. This was, undoubtedly, the most likely way to secure a favourable reception from the public: and we see that even miraculous gifts and divine inspiration, did not render it useless to attend to the dictates of ordinary prudence and propriety.

Our Lord added, according to Luke: “*And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart;*” or, according to Mark—“there abide, till ye depart from that place.” He directed them, of course, if it was found convenient to continue, during their stay in the town, to lodge

in the same house into which they had been at first received; and he guarded them against needlessly moving from house to house, which might offend their first friends, and render them suspected, and which would betray a restlessness, and be hurtful to the objects of their mission, as rendering it difficult for inquirers to know where to find them.

After supposing them to have continued for some time in a city, exerting themselves in preaching the kingdom of God, and working miracles, our Lord instructs them how to conduct themselves when they were about to leave it: and certainly, the procedure he enjoins was well calculated to awaken the consciences of those of the inhabitants who might disregard their message, and reject the gospel. *"And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet, for a testimony against them."* The origin of this practice, and the weight of meaning it would convey, will be the better understood, when the following circumstances are considered. The Jews had a very great veneration for their own land—a veneration which, though it may have, in some, degenerated into a kind of superstition, was yet justified, in a considerable degree, by the signal honours and privileges conferred on it by Jehovah. They called it, and it continues to be called, the Holy Land. This veneration extended to the very earth, the very soil, the very dust of the land. Naaman, the Syrian, appears to have entered into this idea, when, in leaving the land of Judea to return to his own country, he proposed to take, and probably did take with him, "two mules' burden of earth," whereon, or wherewith, to erect an altar, conceiving that soil to be more holy than any other. As the converse of this idea, the Jews looked on all other lands, that is, all heathen lands, like the heathen themselves, as unholy and unclean. Therefore, it is said to have been a practice with them, when they had been abroad, and had arrived at the border of their own country, to shake off the dust of their feet, that they might not bring any of it to pollute, as it were, the land of Judea, and that they might also testify their entire disapprobation and renunciation of every thing heathenish and idolatrous. In like manner, it is said that they were unwilling to allow herbs, or trees, to be transplanted from a heathen land into their own, lest any of the earth should be brought along with them. To Jews, then, who were acquainted with these things, this act must have been very expressive. It signified, to the unbelieving part of the

inhabitants of the city, that the apostles solemnly protested against them—that they were clear of their blood—that they did not acknowledge them as God's people, but counted them as bad as heathens; and that the Lord would shake them off as vile. Very probably, the twelve complied literally with this direction. We read of Paul and Barnabas doing so afterwards, in Acts xiii. 51: when a persecution was raised against them by certain of the inhabitants of Antioch, "they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium." Very similar to this form of protestation by shaking off the dust of the feet, was that by shaking the raiment. Thus, Nehemiah writes (v. 13): "Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise: even thus be he shaken out and emptied." In like manner, as we read, Acts xviii. 6, when the Jews at Corinth "opposed themselves and blasphemed," Paul "shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

By Matthew's account, our Lord said much more to the apostles at this time: in particular, he forewarned them of the various kinds of opposition they would have to encounter; and he exhorted them to be courageous and faithful, from a consideration of a particular providence, and of the heavenly glory that awaited them. These things you will find written in the 10th chapter of that evangelist, from the 16th verse to the end of the chapter. Having received their instructions, and these serious counsels, the apostles, "*departed*," as Luke informs us, "*and went through the towns, preaching the gospel*," or the good news of salvation through Jesus the Messiah, and working miracles of "*healing every where*."

Before mentioning the return of the apostles from their mission, Luke tells us something of the feelings of Herod, with regard to Jesus, whose fame had now become great. "*Now Herod*," that is, Herod Antipas, "*the tetrarch*"—the governor, who was called a tetrarch, because he succeeded to a fourth part of his father Herod the Great's dominions, and who also bore, at least in Galilee, the title of king—this Herod "*heard of all that was done by Jesus; and he was perplexed*;" he was as a traveller bewildered, and not knowing what road to take, or what to think, "*because it was said of some that John was risen from the dead; and of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of*"



*the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this of whom I hear such things?"* As we formerly considered the history and martyrdom of John the Baptist, when lecturing on the 3d chapter, we shall not now go into any repetition, but merely remark, that we have here an illustration of the powerful workings of a guilty conscience. Both Matthew and Mark\* expressly tells us that when Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, he said, "This is John the Baptist." It is truly awful to have a guilty and accusing conscience! This was enough to perplex and torment Herod in the midst of all his wealth, luxury, and power. Let us seek to obtain and to preserve a conscience void of offence; that its testimony, instead of being our torment, may be our rejoicing. Luke adds, that Herod "*desired to see*" Christ. There was curiosity in this desire—curiosity to ascertain if he were really only John risen from the dead, and curiosity to see a miracle done by him. There was also malice in this desire; for, we read in chapter xiii, verse 31st, that some of the Pharisees said to Christ, "Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee"—or, more exactly, wishes to kill thee. This desire to see Christ was gratified, afterwards, as we find in the 23d chapter, from the 7th verse, when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. Then, however, "Herod and his men of war set him at nought." How useless the compunctions of mere natural conscience, when not introductory to pardoning mercy and regenerating grace! Let every sinner see to it that his convictions be followed out to conversion; and every believer, that his consciousness of any thing wrong be the forerunner of actual amendment.

But let us observe, in conclusion, some instructions, or general application, which may be drawn from the account of the mission of the apostles: and we have here much instruction in reference both to ministers and people.

First, *In reference to ministers, we have here several rules, in regard to their qualifications and appointment.* From the apostles standing in the relation of disciples before their designation to the apostleship, we infer that men ought themselves to be converted to God, before they engage in the work of converting others—that they ought to be Christians, before they become Christian teachers. It is true that the Lord may effect good by the instrumentality of careless men: but it is surely those who are in earnest

\* Matt. xiv. 1; Mark vi. 14.

and enlightened, who are generally most useful; and woe to those who preach to others, and are yet castaways themselves! To every such person the words of the Most High seem to apply, with peculiar force: "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" This truth ought to be plainly stated; and yet, how unbecoming would it be to do so in an uncharitable and self-confident spirit, and in a sarcastic tone! When we advert to it, may it be with godly jealousy over ourselves, with meekness, humility, and love.

Again, from the apostles being kept along with Christ to be more fully instructed, before they were sent out, we infer that none should be employed as teachers till they be well qualified by previous instruction. They ought to be taught of God by the Holy Spirit; and, as miraculous gifts have ceased, they can only expect that teaching in the way of diligent and prayerful study. They ought, plainly, to have such an education, such a degree of human learning, as is requisite to their understanding the letter of the divine record, and to their coming forward with respectability and advantage, according to the progress of the times, and the various classes of people to whom they have to minister. Sufficient time should be given for acquiring, and for proving that they have acquired, the necessary character and knowledge. Every man ought to be a Christian; but every Christian is not fit to be a teacher. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," writes Paul to Timothy: and he also says that "a bishop" or Christian minister, who is the overseer of a flock, must be "apt to teach," and "not a novice."

But further still, as the apostles were formally appointed and ordained to their office, and sent forth to preach, by Christ, we infer, that so must all ministers, in so far, at least, as is applicable to a time when Christ's presence, and miraculous calls, appointments, and gifts have ceased. Preachers ought to have that inward call of the Spirit, which is known by a fitness and a decided desire for the work of the ministry, and a longing to promote the cause of Christ and the salvation of men. But in addition to this, and in place of the direct and immediate nomination to the office by Christ himself, there ought, now that he has ascended on high, to come appointment and ordination by those to whom he has intrusted this power, namely, those who are already in the ministry. Paul says to Timothy, \* "The things that

\* 2 Tim. ii. 2.

thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also:" and to Titus, \* "I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders," or bishops, or ministers, as the context shows, "in every city." You will see how this plainly scriptural idea bears against the propriety of any persons undertaking the work of preaching, who are not expressly appointed to it by Christ's ministers. We hold, that there is a scriptural distinction between the office of a minister and the situation of the people, however learned and pious, which cannot, without much danger, be disregarded. When, then, a layman becomes pious, and feels a desire to preach, ought he, as a layman, to follow out that desire, or ought he to be encouraged to do so by others? By no means. God is the God of order, and not of confusion, in the Churches; and no man is entitled to break through that order under pretence of a higher call, when inspiration has ceased. If, indeed, such a person change to the ministerial calling entirely, that may be very commendable; though he should think well before he take such a step, for Paul lays down the general rule for converts, when he says,† "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." It is not enough to plead, in defence of such irregularities, the good that has been done, or may be done, by such persons: for, the good done, is done, not because of these irregularities, but in spite of them, while no little evil, on the whole, results from them. We are not to plead for any error because there may be piety and zeal in those who hold it, or because God may render them of some use to his cause. Suppose, in this country—for we shall not say what necessity might justify, were men cut off from all Christian Churches—suppose a layman of piety, talents, and great property and influence, from an impulse of unfeigned zeal, appears in the pulpit, and even does some good by his preaching; do we allow that he acts well, or for the benefit of the Church, on the whole, by that step? By no means. He, in the first place, transgresses a divine appointment; and, secondly, as to usefulness, he would have been much more useful, in all probability, if he had not stepped out of his own proper sphere. He intrudes into a field in which there are already many diligent and skilful labourers, and he, in a great measure, cuts himself off from the likelihood of benefiting those in his own station of life,

\* Tit. i. 5.

† 1 Cor. vii. 20.

and indeed all sober, thinking people, who become suspicious of him, and who are often prejudiced against what is scriptural and rational in his views and conduct, by what they readily perceive to be unscriptural and extravagant. We speak here the language of truth and soberness, and not of bigotry, or envy. There is very little in Scripture which can be twisted into the support of such a system. As to the case \* of Eldad and Medad, who prophesied in the camp, which led Moses, instead of envying, or forbidding them to prophesy, to say, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" these two men were previously fixed on by Moses, as part of the seventy elders—not to insist on the consideration that the Spirit of God rested on them miraculously, which must always have been sufficient; and therefore, this case is in favour of the position we are establishing. And in the case of the man mentioned in a subsequent part of this chapter, whom the disciples wished our Lord to forbid to cast out devils, because he walked not with them—there, too, there was the gift of miracles, which was a sufficient authority, but which is not bestowed on any in our day. In fact, as soon as we can trace anything like a regularly constituted Church in the Old Testament, we find the difference distinctly marked between the people, and those who were to minister before the Lord in public things. No example of this is more decisive than that of king Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 18), whom, when he went into the temple to burn incense, Azariah and the priests withstood faithfully, saying, "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed: neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God." And, though sometimes, the term priests, under the New Testament, is applied in common to all Christians, every thing ceremonial being now done away; yet we have seen that the distinction between ministers and people, teachers and taught, is clearly kept up throughout the New Testament: so that, with regard to the Christian ministry, it should still be the rule that "no man taketh this honour to himself, but he who is ordained of God, as was Aaron," and we may add, who is outwardly ordained by those who are already in the office.

\* Numb. xi. 26.

But there are also here many lessons to ministers, as to the right discharge of their office, after they are duly appointed to it. For example, they are here taught that the great end of their ministry is "to preach the kingdom of God"—to preach the gospel, in all the light and fulness of the dispensation of the Spirit, calling their hearers to the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not, indeed, the miraculous gifts of healing and exorcising; but they are to direct the spiritually sick to Jesus, the physician of souls, and to labour to deliver men from the spiritual bondage of sin and Satan. They are entitled, it is true, to be properly provided for: but they are here taught carefully to avoid a mercenary spirit and to trust in the Lord, that his providence and his people will take care of them, when they are employed in his service. While their commission extends to all, even to the chief of sinners, they may here learn to expect their first success with those who are already so far impressed as to be, at least, favourably disposed towards them—and also to desire to be fortified by the countenance of those who are of good report in the place where they are labouring. If they faithfully declare the truth, they may expect some success. In cases, however, which, alas! always occur, of persons who will not give heed, they are here taught faithfully and plainly, to warn them of their danger, and to testify against them, not only in words, but by such actions as may be natural and proper, according to the ideas and customs of the country. Though it is now very rarely to be even imitated, I have heard of the significant action here enjoined by our Lord, being once literally adopted with some good effect. The minister of a country parish, being much grieved by the ungodliness and obstinacy of one of his parishioners, who was a householder, and having repeatedly spoken to him in vain, resolved to call on him, at his house, once more, and to speak to him for the last time. He did so; and without making any impression on him. But, as he was rising to leave the house, he said to him, "Well, I can say no more; therefore, I will now shake off the dust of my feet, as a testimony against you." Accordingly, when he came to the threshold of the outer door, he twice or thrice struck first one of his feet against the door-post, and then the other; and, without saying another word, departed. The emblematic action effected what words could not effect; for it

struck the man deeply, on reflection. His conscience was awakened, at least for a time; but I did not learn if the impression was permanent.

We observe, *secondly*, that as this account of the mission of the apostles is instructive to ministers, so it is also *instructive to the people*. It reminds them, for example, of the duty of providing for their ministers. While ministers are not to be mercenary, the people, or those who administer for the people, are not to be unkind. They who waited at the altar, were partakers with the altar. "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Especially, this passage leads to consider what is due to those who are sent out as missionaries to preach the gospel in heathen lands. As it is not reasonable to expect that they will be treated by heathens as the apostles were treated by the best part of the Jewish population; so, it would be a perversion of the directions here given, to inform them that missionaries should now be sent off without any provision, and abandoned to the mercy of the heathen. That would be not a trusting, but a tempting of Providence. If, indeed, our modern missionaries had the power of working miracles, that alone might secure their support; but, as it is, all prudent and kind care must be taken of them at first; and this care must be continued, until a sufficient interest be excited on the spot where they are, to render supply from a distance unnecessary.

Again, all Christians are here reminded of the duty of hospitality, as in general, so particularly to those who come from a distance on any errand connected with the cause of religion. This we infer from its being supposed that the most worthy inhabitants of the cities and towns would invite the apostles to lodge with them. Of this virtue, Scripture furnishes some beautiful examples, such as that of Abraham and Lot to the angels; that of the widow of Zarephath to Elijah; that of the Shunamite to Elisha, for whom she made a little chamber; that of Job, who said, "The stranger did not lodge in the street, but I opened my doors to the traveller;" that of Lydia to Paul and Luke, and perhaps other disciples, of whom Luke thus writes, "She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful unto the Lord, come into my house, and abide there, and she constrained us;" and that of the brethren to Paul and his companions at Puteoli. "Be not forgetful,

then, to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”\*

It is only a slight extension of the principle of the rule, “Inquire who is worthy,” to say, that when Christians come to live in any city, they should be careful of the acquaintances they make: they should not thoughtlessly commit themselves to whomsoever may come in their way, but study, if they are lodgers, to lodge with those who are of good report, and if they are householders, or live with their own family, to become acquainted with those who know and obey the truth.

Finally, *ought you not all to be thankful that the kingdom of God is now preached to you, and careful to give it a believing and cordial reception?* To you is the word of this salvation sent. We testify to you the gospel of the grace of God. We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise made unto the fathers is fulfilled. “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man” (Jesus Christ) “is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things.” Beware of rejecting this salvation. See that you give us no occasion to shake our raiment, to shake off the dust of our feet against you: but so receive from us the word of life, that you and we may have occasion to rejoice, in the day of Christ, that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

\* See also 3 John 5-8.

## LECTURE XLV.

## LUKE IX. 10-17.

“ And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city, called Bethsaida. 11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. 12. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals; for we are here in a desert place. 13. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. 14. (For they were about five thousand men.) And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15. And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes; and, looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.”

WE read in the beginning of this chapter, how the apostles, having received their instructions from Christ, set out on their first mission, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and working miracles of healing. Nor did our Lord intermit his labours during their absence: for Matthew tells us, at the beginning of his 11th chapter, that “ when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in the cities.”

We are not informed how long the twelve were out on this occasion; it is obvious, however, that it was but a short time. In the first verse of the passage under consideration, we find that, “ *the apostles when they were returned*” from their mission, “ *told Jesus all that they had done.*” According to Mark,\* “ the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.” They gave him an account of the doctrine they had preached, and the miracles they had performed; and also, in all probability, of the places they had visited, and the reception they had met with.

\* Mark vi. 30.



On this it is proper to remark, that, like the apostles, all ministers—all who preach the gospel—must return, at the close of their embassy, to give an account, to the Head of the Church, of their preaching, conduct, and success. This is a consideration well calculated to excite them to diligence and faithfulness, and their hearers to the careful improvement of their ministry. The apostle thus exhorts the Hebrews: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

Luke proceeds to say, that Jesus “*took them*” (the apostles), “*and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city, called Bethsaida.*” The word Bethsaida signifies the city, or rather house, of hunting or fishing. It was well situated for hunting, as it belonged to the tribe of Naphtali, whose district is said to have abounded with deer, to which, as well as to the character of the tribe, some think there is a reference in Moses’s blessing: “Naphtali is a hind let loose.” And it was peculiarly well suited for fishing, as it lay on the borders of the Lake of Gennesareth, where the River Jordan runs into the lake. Peter and Andrew, who were fishermen, were of this city. There is no mention of this city in the Old Testament, though it is often mentioned in the New: the reason of which, no doubt, is, that it was, according to Josephus, a very obscure place, till Herod-Philip, the tetrarch, built it up into a handsome city, and gave it the new name of Julias, in compliment to Julia, the daughter of Augustus Cæsar. To a desert, or solitary place, belonging to this city, our Lord now repaired with the twelve. We learn, from Mark, why our Lord wished them to retire for a little: it was that they might “rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” He wisely and kindly wished them to rest, after the fatigues of their mission, and to withdraw from the people, who constantly resorted to them, that they might have leisure for reflection, private instruction, and prayer. And, though they met with some interruption, as we shall soon see, he, no doubt, took care that they should not altogether be deprived of such opportunities of edification. Observe here, that the most zealous servants of Christ cannot be always on the stretch: they must have their seasons of rest, and these, it is their Master’s wish, should be allowed them. Do not, also, all of us

need occasionally, nay, frequently, to retire, not only from the business of common life, but even from the public and active duties of religion? Those who preach the word need retirement for their personal benefit, and for acquiring ideas, and strength of body and mind, for renewed teaching: and those who hear the word need retirement, that they may ascertain whether what they have heard with the multitude be received by them as individuals, and that they may follow up the word by meditation and prayer.

The other evangelists mention that Jesus, with his disciples, went thither "by ship." Being somewhere on the coast when the apostles joined him, he embarked on the sea, as being the least fatiguing way of going to the retired spot to which he intended to conduct them. Luke says, in the 11th verse, that "*the people, when they knew it, followed him.*" Or, as it is in Mark, "The people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran a-foot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him." Some of those who were near the spot where he took ship, knowing him, and rightly conjecturing, by the course he steered, where he intended to land, set out on foot, with all speed, increased their numbers from the towns through which they passed, and were so expeditious that they stood ready to meet him, in a great crowd, by the time he reached the shore.\* Now, as on many other occasions, were the prophetic words fulfilled: "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." On this, we may remark, that when ordinances are removed to a distance from us, we should follow them, and be willing to sacrifice worldly considerations, and to undergo fatigue, in order to reach them. When ordinances are brought to our door, how thankful ought we to be, how careful ought we to be to improve them, and how blame-worthy are we if we neglect them! But, should they be of difficult access, we are not therefore to rest contented without them, nor are we to remain carelessly behind them when they are withdrawn. The command to the Israelites† may be considered as a lesson to us: "When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it."

Though it was, doubtless, somewhat inconvenient for our Lord and his disciples to be thus met by the multitude, yet, as there is no reason to suppose that they were intending

\* Doddridge.

† Josh. iii. 8.

any rudeness—as many of them were influenced by commendable motives—and as a noble opportunity of doing good was again thus presented—our Lord, instead of dismissing them with a reproof, received them kindly, and again began to teach, and to work miracles. According to Luke, “*He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.*” According to Mark, Jesus, “when he came out” of the ship, “saw much people, and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.” From John’s account, 6th chapter, at the 3d verse, it appears that Jesus, in order, we may suppose, that he might be well seen and heard, “went up into a mountain, and there sat with his disciples,” and the multitude also waited on him. It appears, too, from John’s stating that the Passover was nigh, that it was in the season of spring, which admitted of their being in such a situation. Thus our Lord spent the day.

Verses 12–14: “*And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we shall go and buy meat for all this people. (For they were about five thousand men.)*” There were two similar miracles performed by our Lord, namely, this miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, which is related by all the four evangelists; and the miracle of the feeding of four thousand with seven loaves and a few little fishes, related by Matthew\* and Mark.† Contrary to his usual custom, John repeats this miracle of the five thousand, probably to prepare the way for the introduction of the long and interesting discourse which is founded on it, and in which our Lord declares himself “the bread of life.” Consistently with Luke, but introducing some further particulars, John‡ thus writes: Jesus “saith unto Philip, Whence shall we have bread, that these may eat? (And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do.) Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.” From this, it is thought likely that two hundred pence, or denarii, about

\* Matt. xv. 32.

† Mark viii. 1.

‡ John vi. 5.

six pounds five shillings of our money, was all the stock the disciples had at this time. And Philip said that though the whole of it were expended, it would scarcely purchase as much bread as would furnish such a multitude with a slight refreshment, not to speak of a full meal. It did not occur to the disciples how Jesus was to furnish the meal; but he knew well what he was to do. Instances of the miraculous multiplication of provisions had happened before. According to the word of the Lord by Elijah, the widow of Zarephath's barrel of meal wasted not, neither did her course of oil fail. By Elisha's direction, a certain widow poured out of one pot of oil, till all the vessels she could borrow were filled. But the case most similar to this in the Old Testament, is related in 2 Kings, 4th chapter, from the 42d verse: "And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God" (Elisha) "bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof: and he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. And his servitor said, What! should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord." Much more striking, however, is this miracle, by which our Lord, with five loaves and two fishes, fed five thousand men, and that, too, as Matthew\* states, "besides women and children."

It is difficult to conceive any scene of greater simplicity and grandeur, than this must have now presented: "*And Jesus said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them all sit down.*" Or as in Mark,† "And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties." Some conceive this description implies that the people were arranged in separate parties, some of which contained fifty each, and some an hundred each; and that, no doubt, would secure some regularity. Others are of opinion that they were arranged in what are strictly called ranks, or rows, with room to pass between each row, forming thus, at once, one great party with distinct subdivisions; and it is remarked that, if we suppose them thus drawn up, an hundred men in front, and fifty deep, this would exactly exhaust the whole five

\* Matt. xiv. 21.

† Mark vi. 39.

thousand, and place them so that their number would be very easily perceived, while it proved that our Lord knew the number before. The women and children must be supposed to have been seated by themselves, according to the usual custom in Eastern countries.

Then followed a feast, which, however inferior in worldly attractions, far surpassed, in real grandeur, even the royal feast of Ahasuerus. "*Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven,*" a natural and reverential token of his regard being directed to his Father in heaven, to whom he was about to address himself in words, "*he blessed them*"—he prayed for, and actually bestowed such a blessing on the provisions as could come on inanimate objects, and as the present time required—namely, a blessing to the use of the people, and to the increase of the quantity of food. John says that our Lord "*gave thanks*"—thanks, we may suppose, as for all the goodness of God; so especially, for the great display of his power and kindness now to be given. He then "*brake,*" divided the loaves, and also the fishes, into portions; and we must suppose that, as he did so, they miraculously increased in his hands, and, probably, that they increased also in the after distribution. He "*gave*" the provisions, first "*to the disciples,*" to put honour on them, and to show how the affairs of his kingdom in general were to be managed. Then the "*disciples set before the multitude.*" They went round, distributing the provisions in great abundance; John says, "*as much as they would,*" that is, as much as the people would take. Wonderful to tell, "*they did eat, and were all filled*"—fully satisfied! Finally, as we learn from the harmonized account, when they were filled, Jesus said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost: and the twelve, going through the whole ranks, and carefully collecting the broken pieces of bread and fish, "*there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets*"—a much greater quantity than they had at first. How astonishing!

But, let us improve this miracle, literally and figuratively.

Let us improve it *literally*, or in reference to the supply of bodily wants. And, first, we learn from this miracle, that *it is our duty to do what we can to supply the bodily wants of others.* Our Lord showed compassion on the multitude, not only by teaching, but by feeding them.

The disciples appear to have been willing to spend all the money they had, to buy bread for them; and though this was not required of them, they cheerfully brought forward their whole stock of provisions, and distributed them, under their Master's direction. Now, there is in this a pattern for our imitation. None of us can work miracles, it is true, but most of us can contribute something, and all of us should contribute liberally according to our means, to supply the bodily wants of others, of which the want of food is perhaps the most urgent. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen," saith the Lord, "to deal thy bread to the hungry?" We are charged "to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." As the loaves and fishes multiplied in this miracle, so we may say that a little will go far in charity when judiciously applied, and that a particular blessing often attends those who are particularly generous, so that their property is increased, instead of diminished, by their charity, when viewed in all its consequences. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." So also, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,\* "As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." Encouragements to this duty abound in Scripture. In the words of the wise man, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight."—"He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed: for he giveth of his bread to the poor."—"If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry," saith Isaiah, "and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Nay, if such charity flow from Christian principle, it will be acknowledged, at last, as done to Christ himself, when he shall say, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink."

2. We here learn that *Those who follow Christ may trust to him for the necessities of life.* It is, indeed, only this principle which pervades this history, and not what is miraculous in it, which is generally applicable. Miracles have ceased; but the providential government of the world, which is on Christ's shoulder, may be fully depended on by those who, using prudence and diligence in their worldly concerns, are still more earnest in seeking the salvation of their souls. All supplies come originally from him, through whatever channel they may be conveyed; and he has a peculiar care over those who seek him. If the very ravens are fed, much more shall his own people be fed. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." It is only what is necessary, however, which is promised. This miraculous provision was only bread, barley bread, as we learn from John; and fish, which was ordinary and common fare to those who lived by the Lake of Gennesareth. There was no wine, and they must have been contented with water from the brook or spring. As our Lord did not then exert his miraculous power, so neither does he now engage his common providential power, to furnish dainties. Yet, these are blessed promises made to his people, that "bread shall be given to them, and their water shall be sure;" and that, if they "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," all needful things shall be added unto them. Let none of them murmur, though reduced to plain or coarse fare; but, having food and raiment, let them therewith be content. Those who have not even bread, should consider whether they be not destitute of faith. If it be so that any of Christ's real disciples are in want, he will soon supply their want, or abundantly make it up in divine consolation.

3. We are here reminded of the duty of what is commonly called *saying grace at meals.* Before Christ distributed the loaves and the fishes, "he blessed them," and "gave thanks;" and he did the same when he fed the four thousand, when he instituted the Lord's supper, and when he sat at meat with the disciples in Emmaus. In addition to Christ's example, Scripture contains many passages which, in the form of example, or of precept, enjoin attention to this duty. Of these the following may be noticed. Deut. viii. 10: "When thou hast eaten, and art full, then shalt thou bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee." 1 Sam. ix. 13, when Saul was seeking

Samuel, the maidens said to him and his servant, "As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him before he go up to the high place to eat; for, the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that he bidden." Acts xxvii. 34, Paul said to his shipmates, "Wherefore, I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health:" and "when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat." 1 Tim. iv. 4, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for, it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Rom. xiv. 6, "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks." And 1 Cor. x. 30, "If I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Without meaning to say that any precise form, or length, or numeration of particulars, is necessary, the following hints may be given as of general application. A grace is a prayer before, or after meat, which circumstances require to be short, but which ought always to be solemn and earnest, never formal and careless. It most expressly requires an acknowledgment of God as the author of our mercies, and a petition for his blessing along with them: and, as presented by Christians, it ought, in some way, to refer to the gospel, and spiritual things, and be concluded in the name of Christ. At a solitary meal, the duty must by no means be neglected; and then one's own private feelings may be more particularly consulted as to the matter. At a social meal, time and circumstances, in what is indifferent, may be, and ought to be, considered; but all present ought to hear what is said, and join heartily in it. else it is no grace, no act of blessing and thanksgiving of theirs. Children ought to be early instructed in the nature of this duty, and taught and accustomed reverentially to discharge it. Nor ought it ever afterwards to be discontinued. The due observance of this pious custom adorns the best furnished table, and ennobles and sweetens the plainest fare. Let no man, who should be expected to discharge this honourable service before others, whether he be minister, or landlord, or other person presiding, or taking a lead for the time, be afraid or ashamed so to do.



4. From the particular direction our Lord here gave as to the fragments, we draw the general rule that *nothing should be lost, or wasted*. To waste our substance, is a sinful abuse of God's gifts. The prodigal son "wasted his substance with riotous living;" and, according to another parable, "There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods." We must "use this world as not abusing it." It is one thing to be generous, and hospitable; it is quite another to be thoughtless, extravagant, and wasteful. Such wasting is not only offensive to God, but unjust and unkind to our fellow-creatures. With regard, for example, to what is most analogous to the caution in this passage, namely, the neglect and loss of provisions after an entertainment, those who fare sumptuously, or plentifully, should remember that there is many a Lazarus at their door, or in their neighbourhood, who would be glad to be fed with the crumbs that fall—the left food that is taken away from their table. It is a good charity "to send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared." But, whether this exact mode of charity be much resorted to, or not, as it is clear that charity, in some form, should by no means be neglected, so, it is also clear that the being careful not to waste, but, on the contrary, frugally and judiciously to manage affairs in the house, and, indeed, in every department, is the way to place people in those easy circumstances, according to their station, be it what it may, which put it in their power, not merely to give somewhat, but to persevere, without imprudence, in contributing very liberally, to those who are in need. The connection between economy and charity, is well illustrated in Solomon's description of the virtuous woman, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness:"—"she stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." The waster acts a foolish part for himself, too, in every respect:—"There is a treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise," says Solomon, "but a foolish man spendeth it up." Nor should men carelessly sit down without trying to find any piece of property which has been lost; the woman, in the parable, is supposed to search diligently for the lost piece of silver, till she find it. The same principle ought to be applied, also, to the proper improvement of our time. Time is a precious talent committed to us, which ought to be carefully husbanded, and

the fragments, or small portions, of which should be turned to some good account. Though each of these fragments be small in itself, they are very considerable when all put together, and much may be done during them. Let us beware of wasting and losing time by sloth, or inconsideration. "He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." Let us see, then, that we "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Once more here, we should improve this miracle in the literal sense, to *confirm us in our belief of the divine mission and Messiahship of Jesus Christ*. This is, indeed, exactly the conclusion which John\* tells us was drawn from this miracle, by those who were eye-witnesses of it. "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of truth that prophet that should come into the world." And, surely, every man who rightly exercises his reason, must still draw the same conclusion from the same premises. Let us remember, however, that, as the greater part of the spectators of this miracle, though the conviction of Christ's being the great Prophet was thereby forced on their minds, did not receive his doctrine, nor continue to follow him, but "went back, and walked no more with him;" so we ought to beware, lest a somewhat similar inconsistency, on our part, render our profession vain, and our Christianity only a name. If we acknowledge his divine mission and Messiahship, the same evidence should lead us to receive all the doctrines he teaches, to rely on him for acceptance, and to do whatsoever he commands.

Let us, therefore, also improve this miracle *figuratively*, or, in reference to *the supply of our spiritual wants*. In this, our Lord himself leads the way: for, though Luke does not record this, John supplies the account of it. In the same chapter in which this miracle is recorded by John, he tells us how our Lord had soon occasion to complain of many who sought him, not because of the miracles and the truths they established, but "because they did eat of the loaves, and were filled." Our Lord then thus exhorted; "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you:" and he added, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—"My flesh is meat indeed.

John vi. 14.

and my blood is drink indeed." But, the very same spiritual nourishment he now invites you to partake of;—that is, in plain terms, he invites you to partake of all the blessings of salvation through faith in his atonement. And do you not stand in need of this nourishment?—is it not written that man "liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God?" Ought you not to say, with Job, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food?" Are not the blessings which Jesus is now ready to bestow, of much more importance, than if he were here personally present to work a miracle to feed your bodies? The provisions he now brings forward may appear, to the world, to be mean and scanty: but they are just those which, as poor sinners, you require; and they are truly heavenly, and abundant. Knowledge, pardon, peace, comfort, strength, holiness, and every other spiritual blessing, may be had from him. "My God," saith the apostle, "shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." However great the number to be supplied, the provision is sufficient: nay, the more widely it is diffused, the more it increases; the greater the number who are blessed with it, the greater the blessedness of each. Here there is "bread enough and to spare." Like the twelve disciples of old, ministers are employed to distribute this bread of life: and it is well when they can indeed say, "We have received of the Lord that which we deliver unto you."—"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." This we desire now to do, exhorting you all to come, and to be fully satisfied with the blessings of salvation, and saying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."—"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

## LECTURE XLVI.

## LUKE IX. 18-27.

“ And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him : and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am ! 19. They answering, said, John the Baptist ; but some say, Elias ; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. 20. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am ? Peter answering, said, The Christ of God. 21. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing ; 22. Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. 23. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it : but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25. For, what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away ? 26. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. 27. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.”

THE passages parallel to this are in Matt. xvi. 13. and Mark viii. 27. From these two Evangelists, it appears that, though Luke introduces the information which we have now read, immediately after the account of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, some time had intervened, during which our Lord had visited various places, and wrought several miracles. But, without stopping to mention these particularly, let us observe, at once, that the circumstances stated in the passage under consideration occurred in the coasts, or district of country, connected with Cæsarea Philippi. This city is supposed to have been the same formerly called Laish, or Dan,\* rebuilt and much improved by Philip the tetrarch, and called by him, Cæsarea, in honour of Tiberius Cæsar, and also Philippi, after his own name, which served to distinguish this from the other Cæsarea, a much greater city, which was on the sea coast of Phœnicia, and which is repeatedly mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

In Mark viii. 27, we thus read, “ And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the town of Cæsarea Philippi ; and by the

\* Josh. xix. 47 ; Judg. xviii. 7.

way, he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?"—according to the first verse of the passage in Luke, "*And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them saying, Whom say the people that I am?*" From these two accounts, we learn that, "by the way," or, during the course of this journey, as our Lord was "alone," that is, apart from the multitude, and with his disciples only, he prayed with his disciples, and put to them a certain question. May not this be considered as an example to travellers to attend to the duties of prayer and edifying conversation? This, too, furnishes, as nearly as circumstances permitted, an example, on the part of our Lord, of attention to domestic religion; for the apostles, being so much with him, might be considered as his family. And, as he was the Teacher and they were the disciples, we may, from this part of his conduct, infer the general rule that it is the duty of teachers, or masters, to pray with, and for, their disciples, or scholars, and diligently to catechise, and instruct them in the knowledge of Christ.

The question which our Lord put to the disciples was, "Whom say the people that I (or, according to Matthew; that I the Son of man) am?" Though the Son of God, our Lord was also truly the Son of man, having taken on him the human nature entire, both soul and body, yet without sin. This was one of the titles by which the Saviour was to be known, according to Daniel's prophecy.\* Probably, our Lord adopted this title on this occasion, as being the humblest, and the best suited to the lowly circumstances in which he was tabernacling among men. He wished his disciples to say what was the opinion entertained of him by the people, after all the opportunities of judging of him from his teaching and miracles, with which they had been furnished. Our Lord did not, on his own account, need that the disciples should testify any thing to him on this, or on any other subject; for he knew, of himself, all things: some of the uses, however, of his putting this question, are apparent. It served to show his concern for the success of his preaching—to lead the disciples to think and speak on a most important topic—to guard them against the errors relating to it into which others had fallen—and to prepare the way for his asking them what opinion they entertained of him themselves, and for Peter's interesting confession.

\* Dan. vii. 13.

In reply to this question, the disciples said that some (among whom, we were expressly told, was Herod) said that Jesus was "*John the Baptist*" risen from the dead;—that "*some,*" mistaking the prediction that Elijah was to come to prepare the way for Messiah, and not being aware how that was fulfilled in John, said that Jesus was "*Elias,*" or Elijah;—that others, (for so we are told in Matthew) probably, from the eminence of that prophet, said that Jesus was Jeremiah; and finally, that others, without naming any individual, said that "*one of the old prophets was risen again.*" We may here observe, that, as there were of old very different opinions among the people concerning Christ, so there are still many different opinions with regard to various religious questions, which one might think ought to be plain enough, and on which there ought to be but one opinion. Besides, as all the different opinions here stated were demonstrative of some degree, though certainly, a very inadequate degree, of respect to Christ, (for, the disciples do not here mention those who said that he was a deceiver of the people), so, there were still differences of opinion among those who are inquiring after the way of salvation, and who have some respect for religion. Now, the fact of such differences should not, as it unhappily sometimes does, stumble any man, so as to disgust, or discourage him, as if there were no truth at all in religion, or as if certainty on the subject were unattainable: for, what subject is there, in any degree involving human feeling, and depending on moral evidence, on which differences do not prevail? Error is various; but truth is one. Every wise man should seek deliverance from the former, and seek to know, embrace, and hold fast the latter. Nor are we hastily to adopt the opinions of others, because there may be in them some apparent, or real respect to Christ: for, every thing must be tried by the unerring standard of revelation. We are reminded, too, that among many who call themselves the followers of Christ, there are different shades of opinion, with regard to him, which, though professing to honour him, and being indeed complimentary to him, as far as they go, are yet quite inadequate; so that when those who hold them are called on to be more explicit, they deny the truth, and refuse him the honour which is his due. As to this particular subject of difference, the personal and official dignity of Jesus Christ, it is no matter of doubtful disputation, or of inferior importance, for, it is clearly settled by the highest authority, and quite

essential in the Christian scheme. Whatever errors, therefore, might be entertained by the multitude, the disciples were now correctly instructed on this point.

Addressing himself to the disciples, our Lord said, "*But whom say ye that I am?*" To this question, "*Peter,*" who was of a frank and bold temper, and who frequently spoke for them all, replied,—"*The Christ of God.*" We have frequently occasion to mention that the word Messiah, or Christ, signifies the "Anointed One," and is an official name of the Redeemer, who is so called because he was set apart and qualified for his office, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, which were given to him without measure. The disciples, then, confessed Jesus to be not only a prophet, but that great Prophet, Priest, and King, who was to enlighten, save, and rule God's people. According to Matthew, Peter's answer at full length was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This title, the Son of God, was declaratory, not only of his Messiahship, but of his divine nature. He is the Son of God, in a sense peculiar to himself:—he is the only begotten and well-beloved Son of God, of the same nature with the Father, and eternally proceeding from him; and all "men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

Now, my friends, Jesus may be considered as putting the same question to us, which he put to the twelve, "Whom say ye that I am?" Can we, then, in light and in faith, say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" If we can, if we do really believe that he is such a Christ, and has done such things, as the Word of God represents him to be, and to have done—if we believe in him, according to his real character and work—then are we the children of God; for, the apostle John \* declares that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:" and then are we delivered from the reign and wilful commission of sin, for, the same apostle also declares that "whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."—"If ye believe not that I am he," saith Jesus, "ye shall die in your sins"—"but whoso believeth in me shall not abide in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Let us, then, earnestly pray that with "our heart we may believe unto righteousness, and with our mouth make confession unto salvation:" and never let us forget that no man can thus "say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

In this connection, we may just notice, that, according to Matthew,† our Lord now said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," or son of Jonas, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it," hath not discovered to thee this great truth of my Messiahship, in this saving way, "but my Father who is in heaven." Then our Lord added: "And I say also unto thee, Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Without enlarging on this inviting field, which would lead us too far away from the passage before us, the following hints may be given. As Peter had spoken, not only for himself, but for the apostles in general, so our Lord, though addressing himself more immediately to Peter, spoke what, in the main, was applicable to all the apostles also. The only foundation of merit is Christ himself; other foundation, in this sense, can no man lay. In an inferior sense, and in reference to the honour conferred on the apostles, as instruments, it is said that believers, who are the church, "are built upon the foundation of the apostles"—not of one apostle, but of the apostles, all the apostles—"and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." As stewards, or upper servants, in great families, bore the keys, so, we are taught, that Peter, and the other apostles, were raised to high dignity in the household of faith; and, in virtue of their divine inspiration, qualified and commissioned authoritatively to declare the doctrines and precepts which were to be received, or rejected. And our Lord declared that men's present and final state should be determined according to these inspired rules and decisions of the apostles. When we think of these interesting words of our Lord, let us rejoice in the security of his church; and let us have a suitable regard to the written instructions of his inspired servants, according to which we must be either acquitted or condemned.

Referring to the declaration which Peter, for the apostles, had made of our Lord's being the Christ, Luke tells us, that Jesus "*straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing.*" There were various satisfactory reasons for this reserve. For example, had the Jewish and

\* Matt. xvi. 17.



Roman rulers been properly convinced that Jesus was the Christ, his death would not have taken place, as the accomplishment of prophecy, and of our redemption, required: for, "if the princes of this world" had known the wisdom of God, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."\* On the other hand, they being obstinately, wilfully, and sinfully blind to his character, and bent on his destruction, and there being a law that all false prophets and blasphemers, and, of course, especially those who should be so daring as falsely to assume the character of Messiah,† should be put to death; it was necessary to avoid, for a time, all such explicit declarations in words as would have given them a handle to proceed, by an unjust application of the law, prematurely against him. Again, he evidently wished men to infer his Messiahship from his works and his teaching in general, rather than to have it pressed on their reception by positive assertions; and it is plain that this was, at least at first, the way which was most reasonable, most dignified, and most likely to be successful. He directed his apostles to abstain from insisting on this great truth, and even from stating it openly, till the evidence on which it rested was complete, and they could bring it forward with a force of proof which no candid mind could resist. That evidence might be considered as completed by his exaltation, and the outpouring of the Spirit. Accordingly, after that, the apostles were most explicit. Thus, Peter, having spoken of the resurrection and ascension of the Redeemer, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, sums up his sermon, on the day of Pentecost, in these words: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

In connection with this charge, our Lord proceeded: "*Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain and be raised the third day.*" As our Lord spoke plainly to his disciples of his being the Messiah, so, from this time, he began‡ to speak plainly of his being a suffering Messiah—an idea very contrary to the carnal notions of the Jews, but very important, and, indeed, quite essential. "The Son of man *must* suffer:" there was a necessity for this, in order to his accomplishing the work of our redemption, and fulfilling ancient prophecy. He also stated to them the necessity, for the same reasons, of his resurrec-

\* 1 Cor. ii. 8.

† John xix. 7.

‡ Matt. xvi. 21.

tion. To enter on any particular illustration of these points, however, would be an anticipation of what properly belongs to a more advanced period of the sacred history. We shall, therefore, only observe here, that our Lord's devotedness and love are strikingly illustrated by the consideration, that he proceeded in the perfect foreknowledge of all that lay before him; and that after his sufferings were all over, and he had risen from the dead, he said to the two disciples, on the way to Emmaus: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

The disciples were much astonished, and troubled, at this declaration of our Lord, not being aware of the glorious purpose his sufferings were to promote; and Matthew and Mark tell us that Peter "took Christ," that is, probably, took him by the hand, "and began to rebuke him"—tenderly to chide him, "saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But our Lord turned round, and looked on the disciples, knowing them to be of the same mind with Peter, and, with unusual severity, rebuked Peter, saying: "Get thee behind me, Satan" (adversary); "thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest"—relishest—mindest "not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Nay, our Lord now taught, not only that he was to suffer himself, but that all who would be his disciples must expect to suffer also. "When he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also," (as we learn from Mark\*), he then, as Luke mentions in the 23d verse, "*said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*" If any man *will*, that is, wish, or be willing, be cheerfully and resolutely minded "to come after Christ," to follow him as a disciple: "he must deny himself." This is an universal rule: it is as applicable now, as it was when Christ walked on earth; and therefore, it highly concerns us all to attend to its import, and to comply with its requisitions. Let us consider, then, for a little, what is implied in the self-denial to which we are here called. It does not imply a disregard to our own true interest and happiness, for, these are always found, at last, to be inseparably connected with the path of duty. But it implies that we are to be denied to ourselves, as depraved and sinful creatures—that we are to be denied to that spirit which

\* Mark viii. 34.

would set up ourselves, our own wills, as the rivals of God—that we are to be denied to every thing which would, in any way, interfere with our submission and fidelity to Jesus Christ. More particularly, if we are to be the disciples of Christ, we must be *denied to our own wisdom*. While we are to use the natural wisdom, the reason, which God hath given us, we are not to trust in it as sufficient to show us the way of life. There is more hope of a fool, than of those who are wise in their own conceit. The wisest must not glory in their wisdom. We are to be sensible of our ignorance, and desirous to be taught of God, who “hideth these things from the wise and prudent, and revealeth them unto babes.” We must be denied to *our own righteousness*. If we imagine that any thing we are, or say, or do, can have merit to procure the divine forgiveness and favour, or render us worthy of Christ, that will be an insuperable barrier to our submission to the Redeemer. We must renounce all trust in ourselves, plead guilty before God, and cast ourselves on his free mercy, by faith in his son’s righteousness. We must be denied to *all obviously sinful propensities and habits*. Christ is willing to save us *from* our sins, but he will not save us *in* our sins. To suppose that we may be saved notwithstanding our continuing in sin, would be to make him “the minister of sin,” and to turn the grace of God into licentiousness. “If we would be Christ’s, we must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;” we must “through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body;” we must “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.” We must be denied, not only to what is obviously sinful, but also, to *every earthly enjoyment, when it comes into competition with our regard to Christ*. We must, for example, be denied to those *bodily indulgences* which, though in themselves innocent, when under due restraint, become incompatible with spirituality of mind, when felt to be essential, or very important, to our happiness. We must “keep under our bodies, and bring them into subjection.” We must be denied to our *reputation*. Though we are to value a good name in the world, if it can be had consistently with faithfulness to our Lord; we are cheerfully to forego it, if it cannot be retained but at the expense of our conscience. If situated in any degree like Moses, we are to feel and act like him: he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the

pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." We must be denied to our *friends*. That is, though we ought highly to value their good will, and to endeavour to preserve it by all means consistent with duty; we must not allow ourselves to be so wrought on by them, however near and dear to us they may be, as to be prevented from following Christ. Should they attempt so to influence us, we must be denied to their solicitations, allurements, and upbraidings. It sometimes happens that the greatest foes to a man's salvation, are those of his own household. In reference to such a case, our Lord says, "He that loveth father, or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son, or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." We must be denied to our *property*, so as to be ready to undergo any sacrifice of our substance—to our *ease*, so as to be ready to undergo any torture—to our *liberty*, so as to be ready to go to prison—and to our very *life*, so as to be ready cheerfully to lay it down, rather than prove unfaithful to our Redeemer. None of those things must move us; neither must we count our life dear to us, so that we may finish our course with joy.

Following out the same strain, our Lord says that, if any man will come after him, he must "take up his cross daily." This form of expression is borrowed from the circumstance that those who were led out to be crucified were, generally, made to carry the cross on which they were to suffer: and it teaches us that we ought to be ready to undergo any trials which may befall us, and to have even the spirit of a martyr, for Christ's sake. This implies that the cross, or trouble of some kind, is before us, with which we must lay our account—that while crosses occur daily, or very frequently, every man has some cross, or trial, which may emphatically be called his own—that we are not to go in search of crosses, or, to make crosses for ourselves, or, rashly and needlessly to expose ourselves to trouble—and finally, that we ought readily to take up whatever cross providence may clearly lay in our way, that is, we ought to bear it, not because we cannot do otherwise, and by compulsion, but willingly, and so as to go on thankfully and joyfully under it.

In this way of denying ourselves, and taking up our cross, we are to "follow Christ," who not only calls on us to show that we are his disciples, but who, in denying himself, and

becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, at once "suffered for us, and left us an example that we should follow his steps." Let us, then, examine ourselves by this test. What self-denial are we exercising? what cross are we bearing for Jesus' sake? If we are following the desires of an unrenewed heart; if we are turning aside from the cross which God lays in our way, or, if compelled to bear it, we are rebelling under it; if we are walking according to the course of this world, and in no way distinguished from those who are of the world: then, whatever we may imagine, or profess, we are not the followers of Christ, we have not the Spirit of Christ, and we are none of his. But, if we have learned to submit our views and will to his; if we count all things but loss, for the excellency of his knowledge and righteousness; and if, by his cross, the world be crucified unto us, and we unto the world: then are we indeed his disciples, and we may rest assured that, having followed him here, we shall be with him hereafter.

Our Lord now goes on to bring forward arguments to this Christian course. "*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.*"\* Whosoever shall wish to save his temporal life, to escape persecution unto death, by denying Christ, shall lose life in the most important sense, that is, shall come short of heaven, and shall die the second death, or perish for ever. "*But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*" In other words, he who shall lose his temporal life, or be put to death, for Christ's sake, shall escape endless misery, and gain life eternal. "*For, what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself or be cast away?*" Suppose a man were actually to get possession of all the riches, pleasures, and honours of the world; these would not be an equivalent for the loss of his temporal life, much less for the loss of his soul, and of eternal life. But, on this weighty text, which would afford ample scope for a whole discourse, we cannot now dwell. Lord, grant that we may form a proper estimate of the relative value of temporal and eternal things, and take all our measures accordingly.

Verse 26. "*For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of*

\* Summum crede nefas animam præferre pudori,  
Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.

Juven. viii. 79.

*the holy angels.*" We may observe here, that some, alas ! many, are ashamed of Christ; and that all may be said to be ashamed of him, who, inwardly feeling any thing akin to the sense of shame, do not receive him and believe in him, and do not openly acknowledge him in their profession and life. In some unbelieving and impenitent sinners, this shame has a reference chiefly to Christ himself, especially to his lowliness, and to his ignominious and accursed death : Christ crucified is to them a stumbling-block and foolishness. In others, this shame is felt chiefly in regard to Christ's words; they are ashamed to profess his humbling doctrines, and practically to observe his self-denying and holy precepts. But all such persons are here taught that yielding to such false shame as this, however it appear to them to be the way to avoid opprobrium, is the certain way to involve them in merited and overwhelming shame at last, when Christ shall come again.

We are assured that the same Jesus who was taken up into heaven, shall in like manner come again : that is, he shall come literally, personally, in the clouds of heaven, and with power and great glory. He shall thus come at the end of the world, to raise up all that have died, and to judge the quick and the dead. To them that look for him shall he then appear the second time; but without sin, (without sin imputed to him, and without being a sacrifice for sin,) "unto salvation." He shall "come in his own glory and in his Father's glory." It is difficult to say how these two kinds of glory are to be distinguished. Perhaps, the meaning may be, that, besides the splendour of the glorified body he wears as Mediator, the Father will bestow on him some additional glory, when he comes to execute, by his commission, the exalted office of judge. And he shall come in the glory "of the holy angels," that is, attended by a retinue of angels, who, will contribute to the noble solemnity of the scene. At this, his second coming, at the last day, he will be ashamed of those who are now ashamed of him : that is, he will not acknowledge them, he will disown them with scorn, he will condemn them, and he will punish them with everlasting destruction from the presence of the lord, and from the glory of his power. Think of this, ye whom a sinful shame prevents from avouching Christ to be your Lord, and from walking in his ways : and, as you would avoid indelible disgrace at last, break through the foolish snare that now binds you. Think of this, ye too who are in any way ex-

posed to the reproach of men for Jesus' sake. "Let none of you suffer as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters, but if any of you suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf." When your saviour comes, he will come to confess you before his Father and the holy angels. Whatever, therefore, may befall you, and however many your trials may be, "abide in him, that when he shall appear, ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

And now, not to return to any of the foregoing topics, let us conclude with considering what may have been the more immediate import of our Lord's declaration to the disciples, and all who heard him, in the 27th verse; and also what useful hints it may still suggest to us. "*But I tell you of a truth, There be some standing here, who shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God:*" or, as in Matthew,\* "till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom;" and, as in Mark,† "till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." You will observe that our Lord had just been encouraging his hearers to espouse, and to be faithful to his cause, by considerations drawn from a future state, and the judgment of the great day. These encouragements, however, though unspeakably important, related to a distant period, and an invisible world; and, therefore, in addition to these, he proceeds to direct their attention to something which was to happen ere long, and which some of them were to witness before they left this earth. The phrase, to "taste of death," signifies to die, in the ordinary and literal sense. It is thus represented, perhaps, as a cup to be drunk of, a something that may be tasted: and we read of "the bitterness of death." In Heb. ii. 9, it is said that Jesus should "taste death" (that is, die) "for every man." Our Lord told those who now heard him, that some of them should see the kingdom of God come with power, or, the Son of man coming in his kingdom, before they departed this life. What, then, was the event to which he referred? It could not be his personal coming at the day of judgment, for that day is still very remote. Nor could it be his coming, as he will come spiritually to reign in the universal spread of the gospel, for that event is still future. The nearest event to the moment he actually spoke, which can be fixed on, is his glorious transfiguration; and some have been inclined to consider that as what he here intended. But

\* Matt. xvi. 28.

† Mark ix. 1.

that took place, according to Matthew and Mark, who speak exclusively of the two extreme days, six days: and according to Luke, who speaks inclusively, about eight days after this: we cannot reasonably suppose that our Lord would speak of it as a noticeable circumstance that some of his hearers would then be alive. The next event, and that on which others are disposed to fix, is that, after the exaltation of Christ, when the Spirit was poured out from on high, and so many were converted; and that may, perhaps, be considered as included, or, as being the beginning of the fulfilment of this prediction. But, as that happened a few months after the time our Lord spoke, neither can it be considered as at all coming up to the full and natural explanation of the saying. If I knew that some important event was to happen a few months after this, the natural way of speaking of it would be, not that some of you will be alive then, but that most of you will, in all probability, live to see it. We are led, then, to look on that as the true interpretation of these words, which refers them, if not exclusively, yet chiefly, to Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem, abolish the Mosaic economy, and introduce the full reign of the gospel. This is set forth under the figure of his "coming," that is, his providential coming, as in other places, so especially, in his own striking prophecy in the 24th chapter of Matthew. When Jesus had spoken of the destruction of the temple, the disciples said to him: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" It is true that there are difficulties connected with a consistent and full interpretation of the whole chapter, and that there is also in it a typical and literal description of Christ's coming at the last day; but, there is no room for doubt as to its applying, in the first instance, to the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, this is just such a period as that, speaking in relation to it, our Lord might be supposed to say that some of those who stood by should not taste of death till they had seen it; that is, that most of them would be dead before it, but some of them would survive it: for, it happened about forty years after the time he spoke. His words, too, in the 34th verse of the same chapter of Matthew, are quite in favour of this interpretation: "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." We know that the apostle John, for one, lived till after this period; and some think, apparently with much reason, that this was foretold



of him by Jesus, when he said to Peter, in the last chapter of John's Gospel: "If I will that he (John) tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" So also, there is every reason to believe that several more of our Lord's hearers (though no more of the apostles) lived till after that awful catastrophe. Such seems to be the import of this passage, as in relation to those who stood hearing our Lord. And well might he refer to that coming, signal vengeance on his enemies, and interference for his friends, and proof of his divine mission, as a reason why men should boldly confess him, and be faithful to his cause. Surely, those of his true disciples who lived to witness these scenes, would be completely confirmed in the faith; and those unbelievers who lived to witness them, and still continued unbelieving, would be left without a shadow of excuse.

But, what improvement should we now make of these words? I would say, first of all, that what few of our Lord's hearers lived to see, we all know to have been accomplished, and therefore, we ought to reap from it all the benefit it is calculated to impart. Let that glorious display of Jesus' power, convince us that he is indeed the Messiah, and that it is vain to look for another. Let us take warning, also, by the vengeance which fell on those who denied and crucified him: and let us feel assured that he, who spared not the natural branches, will not spare us, if we be unfruitful.

Again, the terms in which this declaration is couched, suggests that there will be another glorious illustration of the Son of man coming in his kingdom—of the kingdom, or reign, of God coming with power, when the universal spread of the gospel shall reduce all nations under the Saviour's victorious sway. And, as the Son of man came in his kingdom at the period already mentioned, though there was no personal appearance of him then; so, it is as plain that there is no propriety, but a very great absurdity, in supposing that he will personally appear when he reigns on earth at the now approaching triumph of the gospel. That there are any already born, who shall live to see the splendour of that day, it would be rash to affirm. It seems certain, however, that a progress is making to a most desired consummation, and that more glorious things will soon be witnessed in the world. Let the full persuasion of the coming triumph of your Redeemer's cause, even on earth, now confirm you in your devotedness to him, ye who love his name. Should you die before all the kingdoms of this world become the

kingdoms of your Lord and of his Christ, you will see nobler things in heaven than even such a sight would be on earth. Think, too, of the moment, when you shall see him coming in his kingdom at the last day, to bless and crown all his faithful followers; and say whether you have not every reason to be steadfast. But, indeed, your evidences of the Redeemer's glory, and your encouragements not to be ashamed of him, are not all in reserve: many such are already given you. Yes, his kingdom is come already; he himself is already come with power. He is come to every soul that knows and trusts him. He is come into every heart that loves him. He is come to yourselves. Say not lo here, or lo there!—for the kingdom of Christ, the reign of God, is within you. Cherish, then, more and more, his blessed sway. Yield to all the holy laws, and hold fast all the great privileges of that kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Thus, when your days are fulfilled, and you come to taste of death, its bitterness will soon be passed, and you will be translated from the kingdom of grace to the kingdom of glory.

## LECTURE XLVII.

LUKE IX. 23-36.

“And it came to pass, about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29. And, as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. 30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias. 31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. 32. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. 33. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. 34. While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved son; hear him. 36. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.”

THE circumstances of our Redeemer's life on earth were, for the most part, obscure and sorrowful. Though he was “in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself.” He laid aside his divine glory, so as not to exhibit it before men; a veil was thrown over it, to hide it from human view; nay, he submitted to shame and sorrow in almost every shape. “He had no form nor comeliness,” as the world judged—“no beauty that they should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; they hid, as it were, their faces from him: he was despised, and they esteemed him not.” Yet there were a few passages in his history which formed an exception to this rule, and in which the splendour of the appearance demonstrated, even to the outward eye, the lustre of his character, and his connection with heaven. At the commencement of his humiliation, when he was born into this world of suffering, the angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds of Bethlehem, and the

glory of the Lord shone round about them; and, when the angel had informed them of the glad tidings of a Saviour's birth, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." At the close of his humiliation, too, his glory shone forth illustriously in all the circumstances of his resurrection, particularly the ministration of angels on the occasion; and more illustriously still, in his ascension, when, as two angels in white stood by, his wondering disciples saw him taken up into heaven, till a cloud received him out of their sight. So also, in the middle of his public ministry, there was given one signal, visible display of his glory, which must have been most refreshing and instructive to those who actually witnessed it, and which, it is to be hoped, will, by the blessing of God, prove refreshing and instructive to us, while we are, as it were, still accompanying our Lord in a course of meditations on the different parts of his history:—that display was his transfiguration on the mount.

The parallel passages, to both of which we shall occasionally refer, are in the 17th chapter of Matthew, and the 9th chapter of Mark.

"*And it came to pass,*" says Luke, "*about an eight days after these sayings;*" that is, after he had spoken what is contained in the preceding verses, concerning his own sufferings, the self-denial and faithfulness required of his disciples, and the coming of his kingdom. Matthew and Mark say that it was "after six days;" the period may have been, as we formerly noticed, six full days, or eight including the extremes; and this is here said by Luke to have been about eight days.

It came to pass that Jesus "*took Peter, and John, and James.*" It has been objected to revelation, by infidels, that it does not inculcate the virtue of friendship. But the objection is groundless; nay, the way in which the Scriptures treat of friendship, is one of the many proofs that they proceed from him who formed and perfectly knows human nature. An express command, laid on all men, to form what are commonly called friendships, or peculiarly strong attachments and close intimacies with each other, would have been unsuitable to our mental constitution, and, in many cases, impracticable; because friendships are generally the result, not of premeditated design, or of efforts of

will, but of similarities of temper and likings, and other circumstances not under human control. Scripture does, therefore, all that is proper, and nothing more, in this case. It lays the true foundation for friendship, in that principle of universal love, which is ready to go out with peculiar strength towards those who have a peculiar claim on it, or with whom we are brought into peculiarly close contact. It does positively inculcate the duties of friendship when it is once formed, for, it says, "He that hath friends must show himself friendly;" and again, "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not." And it gives us beautiful examples of friendship, as in the case of David and Jonathan, but especially, in the case of Jesus Christ towards some of his disciples. Of his disciples, the three here mentioned, were plainly treated with more favour, and admitted to greater intimacy, than the rest: and even of these three, there was one to whom he was more tenderly attached, than to the other two; for, John was called, by way of eminence, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." These three, Peter, John, and James, were the three who were favoured to be present, also, at the raising of Jairus' daughter, and at our Lord's agony in the garden. The sight of the two glorious scenes may have prepared them for bearing the awful night of Gethsemane. In like manner still, a believing view of the glory of the Saviour's person, character, and work, enables us to contemplate, not only without offence, or dismay, but with admiring wonder, his sufferings and death, and is the best preparation for those scenes of distress through which we ourselves may have to pass. We may also observe that our Lord took with him, on this memorable occasion, a competent number to bear testimony to the scene; for, it is at the mouth of two or three witnesses, that every thing must be established.

Accompanied by these three disciples, our Lord "*went up into a mountain.*" Tradition says that the particular mountain was Tabor. Tabor is situated in the north of Galilee; and it is a very lofty mountain, with a plain on its summit. Several of the most remarkable events in our Lord's history took place on mountains. It was on a mount that he preached that long and interesting sermon which is commonly designated from the circumstance. He was transfigured, as is commonly believed, on mount Tabor; he was crucified on mount Calvary, and he ascended from the

mount of Olives. A mountain was a very suitable place for this exhibition of his glory; and it was also a suitable place of retirement for that devotion in which he previously engaged. He went up, we are told, into the mountain *"to pray."* We frequently read of his retiring for this exercise. If it be asked, Why did our Lord pray at all, seeing he was the true God? we reply, He was also man, and, as a human creature, prayer was his duty: he prayed, too, as an example to us; he prayed, as it behoved him to fulfil all righteousness; and he prayed as our great Intercessor. The Father saith to the Son, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Our Lord went up to the mountain to pray, and probably (as he frequently did) to spend the night in prayer.

It was *"as he prayed,"* that his transfiguration took place. God has often manifested his signal regard to prayer. Thus, Daniel writes: "And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God, for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel" "touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding." The Lord said to Ananias, the disciple, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth." So, on all the three occasions in which an audible voice from heaven bore testimony to our Lord, he was engaged in prayer, namely, at his baptism—at this time—and, as in John xii. 28, where we are told, that when Jesus had prayed, "Father, glorify thy name, there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Ought we not to consider this as greatly encouraging us to the duty of prayer? Though we are not to look for miraculous manifestations, we may rest assured that, as to all needful supplies of grace, our heavenly Father will "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Is it not, also, most commonly when believers are in the actual exercise of prayer, under the influence of the Spirit of adoption, that the Holy Spirit bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God? But let us consider the circumstances of the transfiguration.

Matthew and Mark say, in one word, that Jesus was

"transfigured," or metamorphosed. His general appearance was that of an ordinary person. According to the passage already quoted, he "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, being found in fashion as a man." But now, there was a glorious change in his appearance; and, in describing that change, two circumstances are noticed, his countenance and his raiment. Luke says, "*the fashion*," or more correctly, the appearance, "*of his countenance was altered*." Matthew says, "his face did shine as the sun." Something similar to this occurred in the case of Moses, when he came down from the mount; his face shone, and the people being afraid to come nigh, he put a veil on it. The Lord, then, doubtless put high honour on Moses: but that prophet's honour was derived, he shone with borrowed lustre, with a lustre inferior to that of Christ, and only as a type of Christ. The Son of God's face now shone with a brightness as of the sun, which no veil could hide; it shone with underived and divine splendour. What a display of glory was this! and how astonishing to think of the appearance which the very same countenance afterwards assumed! How amazing the condescension and love he displayed, when in him were fulfilled the words, "His visage was more marred than that of any man, and his form than the sons of men"—"He hid not his face from shame and spitting!"

But the appearance of "*his raiment*," also, was altered, and, according to Luke, "*was white and glistening*." According to Matthew, "his raiment was white as the light;" and according to Mark, "his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller," or bleacher, "on earth can white them." These are most striking descriptions of celestial splendour. Of the angel at the sepulchre, it is said that "his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." All the saints in heaven are represented as arrayed in white, to teach us their purity and glory. Still, of all the angels and saints it must be remembered that their glory is derived; and of the redeemed in heaven, it is expressly said, that they "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Christ's glory, we repeat, was essential and divine, and far surpassing that of any creature. The appearance which the Son of man made in vision to John, as described in the first chapter of the Revelation, was similar to what he assumed on the mount: "His head and his hairs were white like

wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"—"and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." There was now beheld the glory of his divinity itself. This was the great God clothed with honour and majesty, and covered with light as with a garment. Jesus was now manifested to be "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." To this visible glory, as well as to the moral display of the divine character, the apostle John, who was present on this occasion, may have some reference, when he says, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

Besides Christ's own personal glory, there occurred, at the same time, another most wonderful circumstance. "*Behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory.*" The apostles heard at least some part of the conversation, and gathered from it who the celestial visitors were. They appeared in a glorious form, somewhat similar to what Jesus himself had assumed, and such as is worn by the redeemed in heaven. As for Elias, it is certain that he was in the body, for, like Enoch, he had been translated without seeing death, though he must have undergone the change which Paul tells us the believers shall undergo who are on earth when the last trumpet shall sound. As for Moses, it is vain to inquire how he became visible to mortal eyes. We know that he died, and was buried in a valley in the land of Moab.\* The opinion of some that his body was raised for this occasion, is merely conjectural, and not resting on any scriptural authority. It may, however, have been so. Elijah's case is clear.—The glory of the risen saints will be somewhat like Christ's; he will "change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." In this glorious appearance of these two Old Testament saints, we have a proof of the immortality of the soul, and of the happy and glorious immortality of God's people—a proof that "those who have fallen asleep in Christ are not perished." And here, in the case of Elias at least, we have a collateral proof of the general resurrection, and of the change of those then on earth, and a pattern of what



will finally be the glorious embodied state of all the saints. From this particular example of intelligent intercourse between Moses and Elias, we may also infer the general rule that, after death, the saints personally distinguish each other with reference to their earthly history; and mutually form an acquaintance with those who have lived at periods very remote from each other. It cannot escape the serious student of scripture, that there was something highly demonstrative of the divine wisdom in the choice of the two saints who now appeared to do honour, and to bear testimony, to Messiah; the one being, as it were, the representative of the law, and the other of the prophets, or, Moses being the giver, and Elias the restorer, of the law—both most eminent characters, and standing, together, for the whole Old Testament. Moses and the prophets bare witness, in their writings and teaching, to our Lord, and he taught that if men did not believe Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. What they all testified in their writings and words of old, *that* these two now came to testify again personally. Moses came to show that, in Jesus, the typical sacrifices and ceremonies were about to be fulfilled; and Elias, that the prophecies were on the point of receiving their accomplishment at the same time. In their very appearance, they do him homage; they, as it were, lay down their commission at his feet; they bear witness that he was Messiah, to be received as Lord of all, and that the dispensation of the law was just about to be abrogated, and that of the gospel introduced.

We are even told what was the subject of their conversation with Jesus, "*They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.*" "His decease," that is, his departure,\* his exit, his death. There is something remarkable, too, in the form of expression, this death he was "to accomplish," or fulfil: it was not a useless suffering to which he was to be driven; but it was a great, a glorious, a blessed work, which he had cheerfully undertaken, and which he was triumphantly to accomplish. The original, too, conveys the idea that he was just about to accomplish, or shortly to accomplish this death. We are told the general subject, which was deeply interesting; but we are not told

\* \* Ἐξόδος. The same word occurs in 2 Peter i. 15. It teaches the immortality of the soul, and intimates that the soul is the man, and, at death, does not cease to exist, but only goes elsewhere.

the particular way in which the conversation was conducted. We know that the great things concerning the Redeemer's death, were the subject of the prophets' predictions and deep study, long before. "Of which salvation," says Peter, "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." And we know that Jesus had this death to undergo, as determined in the divine purpose, as foretold in ancient prophecy, and as necessary to our redemption. "O fools," (said he, after his resurrection, to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus,) "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself." When Moses and Elias now talked with him on this topic, it was not to instruct him in any thing which he knew not, or which was not present to his mind: they must have been all humility and reverence before him, while thus privileged and honoured. As to the particulars of the conversation, without affirming, we may conjecture, that they spoke of the divine counsel and prophecies relating to his death;—of the heavy sufferings which were to lead to it;—of its vicarious and atoning nature—of the love which prompted it—of the blessings which were to flow from it—of the great debt of obligation under which Moses and Elias themselves lay to its retrospective efficacy—of the wide extent to which its saving virtue was to be carried—of the glory which should thence accrue to his Father and to himself, as intimated in such passages as this, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;"—and in general, we may suppose that they spoke of whatever tended to animate him to the deadly but victorious conflict. O what an important topic! and how deeply did it involve all our dearest interests!

The evangelist goes on to say, "*But Peter, and they that were with him,*" namely, James and John, "*were heavy with sleep.*" They seem to have fallen asleep, while Jesus was praying; and they thus lost the first part of the glori-

ous sight, and the first part of the wonderful conversation. In this, there was betrayed much human infirmity at least, if not sinful carelessness. In like manner, the same three were asleep during a part of Christ's agony in the garden. Thus, some persons are guilty of literally falling asleep, or of paying as little attention, as if they were asleep, under the preaching of the word, and even during the solemn exercise of prayer. This is very sinful, if not the irresistible effect of absolute bodily weakness; and it is very hurtful, as it prevents them from hearing at all, or from observing those parts of the service which might prove peculiarly suitable, edifying, and refreshing to their souls.

At last, however, the three disciples awoke, and thus were competent witnesses of what passed, in so far as divine wisdom saw fit that it should be observed by them, and made known to the world. It may be observed, too, that the express mention of their awaking is a clear proof that the transfiguration took place in reality, and not in a dream, or any unsubstantial representation. How must the disciples have been struck, when they opened their eyes on the celestial glory, which, on the mountain's top, turned the darkness of night into more than the splendour of the sunny day! And, what must have been their feelings, when they thus beheld their Lord, learned who the heavenly visitants were, and listened to their delightful discourse!

Verse 33. *"And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here."* It was indeed good for them: it must have been most profitable, and most delightful. Happy were their eyes, for they saw, and their ears, for they heard, such things. In like manner, all who enjoy Christ's spiritual presence, and have a manifestation of his glory, in ordinances, may say, "It is good for us to be here." It is good for their knowledge, good for their faith, good for their love, good for their holiness, and good for their comfort. "It is good for me," says the Psalmist, "to draw near to God."—"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Finding their situation on the mount so pleasant and profitable, the disciples wished their stay on it to be prolonged; and, perceiving that Moses and Elias were preparing to depart, or actually departing, Peter, in name of the other two, and for himself, made this extraor-

dinary proposal: "*Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*" He proposed to construct tents, in which they might dwell, and find shelter. This proposal showed, at once, much excellence, and much weakness. There was much commendable in the spirit by which it was dictated. It showed a great veneration and love for the Saviour, and a high value for the presence of the heavenly strangers. It was disinterested, too, as it made no mention of tents for the disciples; and it was made with a becoming spirit of humility and submission, for, according to Matthew, Peter prefaced it with the words, "If thou wilt." At the same time, there was plainly much weakness in this proposal. How could Peter imagine that glorified saints needed any such shelter as that? or that poor earthly tabernacles could have any charms to detain those who had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Considering, too, the ministry Jesus had to prosecute, and the death which, it had just been said, he had to accomplish, how could Peter think of detaining him on the mountain's top? Or how could Peter think it desirable, for himself and his fellow disciples, to take up their abode there, considering the various duties, and especially the apostleship, which they had to discharge? But it is needless to try to contrive a rational account of such a proposal, seeing we are told that he spoke, "*not knowing what he said.*" Astonishment and fear, and yet delight, at what he beheld, overcame him, and made him speak unadvisedly with his lips.

Our Lord made no reply to this proposal; but events quickly showed it to be vain. "*While Peter thus spake, there came a cloud,*" Matthew calls it "*a bright cloud,*" "*and overshadowed them.*" This was, probably, similar to what was called the Shechinah, or glory, of the Lord, that is, the bright cloud, which repeatedly appeared under the Old Testament dispensation, and, in particular, took possession of the tabernacle and temple;\* and which, without presenting any similitude, or bodily shape, was the symbol of the immediate and gracious presence of Jehovah. This bright cloud, then, on the mount of transfiguration, was the certain token of the presence of God the Father, who soon spoke from it. What a wondrous addition to the other wonders which then presented themselves to the three apostles! But a sense of the present Deity has always filled the

\* Exodus xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 10.

hearts, even of good men, with some degree of trepidation; the apostles, accordingly, "*feared*," were filled with holy dread, "*as they entered into the cloud*," which closed around them.

In these solemn circumstances, and while all was reverential silence, "*There came a voice out of the cloud, saying*," (and including the other clause given by Matthew, the complete saying was this), "*This is my beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased; *hear him*." This testimony is the same which was given to Christ at his baptism, with the addition, however, of the command, "*Hear him*." He is the Son of God, in respect of his divine nature; and he is the Son of God, also, by miraculous conception, and by express designation to the office of Messiah, for which he was qualified by the Spirit: and all this he was declared and proved to be by his resurrection from the dead. He was God's "*beloved Son*," the Son of his love, his dear Son—dear to him on account of all his divine excellencies, and all his mediatorial performances. In him the Father "*was well pleased*"—well pleased with the Son himself for what he was, and what he had done, and was to do and suffer—and well pleased with his people in him, that is, with believers for his sake. "*The Lord is well pleased*," saith Isaiah, "*for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable*." The Father closes this great testimony to his Son in the words, "*hear him*." As if he had said, "*Moses and Elias are to withdraw, and to give place to my beloved Son; but their prophecies of him are to be fulfilled; be not troubled, therefore, at their departure, nor seek to detain them. He will be with you, and hear ye him:—hear him with attention, hear him with faith, hear him with obedience*."

The sequel of this amazing account, as gathered from the harmony of the three evangelists, is, that, "*when the disciples heard*" the voice, "*they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid*. And Jesus touched them, and said, *Arise, and be not afraid*," inspiring them, we may suppose, with strength and courage. "*And*" "*suddenly*," "*when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone*." Moses and Elias had vanished, and the disciples, "*lifting up their eyes, and looking round about, saw no man any more, but Jesus only, with themselves*." He made no refusal of the offered tents, but the event decided the question. The heavenly visitants are gone, and Christ lays aside his visible glory, and assumes

his wonted appearance of common humanity. "And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead"—probably, lest till after that great and leading evidence was given, this account should appear as an idle dream or an incredible tale.\* In obedience to his injunction, the disciples "*kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.*" After his resurrection, however, they made no secret of this wonderful occurrence, but published it to the world, in their preaching, and recorded it in their writings, for our instruction. And well is this authentic record of it entitled to our serious and admiring consideration. We have here a view of the law and the prophets, and a representation of the apostles, and the Son of God himself, the centre and substance of the whole—a view of the church on earth, and in heaven, under its great and glorious head. This was, indeed, by far the most illustrious company ever seen on earth. To conclude with some additional observations:—

Let us, 1. Mark in our Lord's transfiguration, a clear *proof of his divine mission.* Here we have the heavenly inhabitants, and Jehovah himself, bearing testimony to it; and here, in the midst of his humiliation, at which, if there had been nothing of his glory ever manifested on earth, we might have been in danger of stumbling, he is exhibited in his unveiled dignity, and in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Accordingly, one of the witnesses of this event, namely Peter,\* afterwards selects this miracle out of many, and thus reasons from it, to prove that the gospel was no dexterously contrived imposture, but true and divine. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

2. We have here a beautiful *example of serious conversation.* "They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem,"—of Messiah's atoning death, and all the blessings of his purchase. Alas! that the only subject which was found worthy to engage attention when these

\* Doddridge.

\* 2 Pet. i. 16.

heavenly strangers met the Son of God below, should be the only subject which is excluded from the conversation of multitudes! "They are of the world," said John, one of the witnesses of the transfiguration, "therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." Let us not deceive ourselves; if we know not what it is to speak, and to speak with pleasure, of the atoning death of Christ and the important topics connected with it, the mind that is in us must be very different from that of Moses and Elias and Christ; and were we to leave the world thus, we should be quite unfit for the society of the glorified saints and exalted Redeemer. If we do indeed rest our hope on Christ's decease, and feel, in some degree, its constraining influence, let us here feel rebuked for having so often met, even in Christian society, without speaking of any but worldly topics; and let us be admonished and encouraged more fully to avail ourselves of the edification and comfort, which cannot but flow from the interchange of sentiments on that subject, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in which are centered all our hopes for time and for eternity.

In connection with this, we may remark, that, as Jesus spoke of his own decease, and Moses and Elias hesitated not to speak to him of it also; so, it would be well for us to accustom ourselves to think and speak of our own death, and, instead of being offended with others for speaking, to encourage them to speak to us of it; and also, when opportunity serves, and duty calls, prudently and affectionately to speak to them of theirs. Not that there is any propriety or use, except in occasional instances, of speaking as if we were confident that our own, or our friend's death, was just at hand: but, the knowledge and proper consideration of an approaching change, is a likely means of deeply impressing the mind: and especially, the frequent and serious consideration of death, before there is any appearance of its immediate approach, is one of the most likely means, under God, for leading men to prepare for it, and thus enabling them to meet it with composure and safety, when it shall actually arrive. "O, that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end!"

3. The affectionate, but inconsiderate proposal of Peter to construct tabernacles, and to *remain on the mount* of transfiguration, should be improved by us. Though it was inconsiderate, it nevertheless discovered much love for

Christ, and for religious privileges: and we may safely say that they who have nothing of this feeling—they who, when favoured with these religious privileges in the observance of which Christ is wont to come unto his people and bless them, wish them soon to be over as a weariness to them, and are not disposed to say, “It is good for us to be here,” and would not gladly prolong their stay before God, if circumstances permitted—are not Christ’s disciples at all. Something very like this sentiment of Peter, though more enlightened and more considerate, is that of the Psalmist, which, in their most favoured opportunities, believers, in general, find so congenial to their souls: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” But there ought to be limits to this desire; for it may be carried too far. If in their closet, or their family, or the house of God, believers get a more than ordinarily clear discovery of the spiritual glory of Christ, and are much refreshed, and drawn out in the exercise of religious affections, they may feel a wish to continue in the same way, and in this same devout and abstracted frame, and to spend their life in pious contemplation: but that is to forget their situation here—it is to forget that this is a state of pilgrimage, a scene of action and of suffering; and therefore, however desirable it is to keep up a right frame of spirit, they must be ready to move on in the path of duty, and to follow Christ whithersoever they are called. And so, with regard to the state of Christians as to prosperity and adversity, joy and trouble—how varied it is below! Now, on the mount, the eminence of enjoyment; and anon, in the valley of suffering. Let us, then, be thankful for whatever favours our Master may send us: but, however happy we may be, let us not imagine that such happiness will always continue; and let us not speak, or think, of making tabernacles. This is not our rest. Here we have no continuing city. Let us seek one to come. If we wish to find a permanent abode of bliss, we must look far higher than to the summit of Tabor, higher than the highest mount of joy on earth, even to the heights of heaven.

4. We may infer, from this account, *how glorious a place heaven must be*. On the mount of transfiguration, heaven might be said, in some measure, to be brought down to earth; and, from what was then seen, some idea may be entertained



of what heaven itself is. How glorious was that sight! and yet it was only a small specimen of what is within the veil. There his redeemed people see Jesus as he is, and in all the splendour of his exaltation. There, too, they see the Father face to face, and the Holy Ghost, or the seven Spirits which are before the throne. There they see the whole host of angels; and there they see not only Moses and Elias, but the whole of the glorified saints—a great multitude which no man can number. There, there is no drowsiness, no cloud, no fear. There, there is no conversation of any coming sufferings, and death, either of Jesus, or of his people. When they do speak of his decease, they speak of it as long ago accomplished, and with adoring gratitude and love, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” When they do speak to each other of their own sufferings and death, they speak of them with adoring gratitude, as gone by for ever: they speak of them with tenderness, but without a tear; for God has wiped away all tears from their eyes, and with them, there shall be no more death, neither sorrowing, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. There, they may indeed say, “It is good for us to be here.” There, there is no need of any contrivance to render their state permanent. There is no need to make tabernacles, for in their Father’s house there are many mansions, and their Saviour has prepared a place for them. May we all be partakers of that glory! But, lest any of us should come short of it, let us, in the

Last place, observe the absolute necessity of paying due attention to the declaration and the command, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*” Do we, then, receive him in his true mediatorial character? Is he beloved by us? Are we well pleased with him, satisfied and delighted with his person, character, and work? Are we hearing him? Are we attending to him, so as savingly to understand him, believe him, and obey him? If we do not thus hear him, we shall never enjoy his glorious presence, but we shall perish for ever. Let us mark well the words which were spoken by Moses to the fathers, nearly fifteen hundred years before his appearance on the mount of transfiguration: “A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

And it shall come to pass, that every soul who will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Let us not attempt to excuse our unbelief and disobedience, by saying that we have not seen him in glory, nor heard the voice of God bear witness to him, as on the mount of old. What then occurred has been transmitted to us in authentic records; and all the three witnesses continued faithful to the testimony, notwithstanding persecution. God speaks to us in his word; and this voice let us hear. He speaks to us by his ministers; their words are his words, when taken from the Scriptures, for Jesus says to his ministers, "He that heareth you, heareth me." Let us all, then, as we regard our duty, safety, and happiness, hear him, hearken diligently unto him. May the Lord enable us to incline our ear and come unto him, and to hear, that our souls may live!

## LECTURE XLVIII.

LUKE IX. 37-45.

“And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. 38. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child. 39. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again; and, bruising him, hardly departeth from him. 40. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. 41. And Jesus, answering, said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. 42. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. 43. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But, while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 44. Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. 45. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.”

THE case of dispossession, with which this passage opens, is also related by Matthew and Mark; and of all the accounts, that of Mark is by far the longest, and most particular—a proof that his Gospel is not an abridgment of Matthew's, but an original and independent work.

“*And it came to pass,*” says Luke, “*that on the next day,*” the day immediately following the night which they had spent on the mount of transfiguration, “*when they,*” namely, Jesus, and Peter, James, and John, “*were come down from the hill, much people met them.*” Mark, in his 9th chapter, from the 14th verse, introduces the account thus: “And when he,” Christ, “came to his disciples,” that is, to those apostles who had not been with him on the mount, “he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway, all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and, running to him, saluted him.” Their great amazement could not have arisen from the mere circumstance of his coming down from the mountain, nor from any thing which could have presented itself to their notice

in his usual appearance, with which, indeed, most of them must have been already familiar: in short, though the reason of this astonishment is not expressly stated, there seems to be no way of satisfactorily accounting for it, but on the very probable supposition that, though our Lord had laid aside the divine splendour of the transfiguration, and assumed his usual form, in the main, yet, a certain uncommon appearance of majesty and glory still remained visible in his countenance, as was the case with Moses, of whom we are told that his face shone for some time after he came down from mount Sinai. The questioning, or disputation, which the scribes were holding, we may believe, maliciously and triumphantly, seems to have been about the case which had baffled the disciples, and which one very deeply interested came forward to explain.

Luke says, in verse 38th, "*And, behold, a man of the company,*" even the sorrowful father of the afflicted young man, "*cried out,*" loudly and eagerly, "*Master,*" Teacher, "*I beseech thee, look upon my son*" with an eye of compassion—have pity on him, and restore him; "*for he is mine only child,*" which greatly aggravates the affliction. Matthew says that the man came "*kneeling down to Jesus,* and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son." In describing the situation of his son, the man says, according to Luke, "*And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again; and, bruising him, hardly departeth from him.*" But, that we may have the full description of his dreadful case, let us take in what is said in Matt. xvii. 15: "He is lunatic, and sore vexed; for oft times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water;" and in Mark ix. 17: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away." All these woful circumstances met in this dreadful case;—epilepsy, causing him to fall down wherever he might be, and excessively agitating his frame, and wasting his bodily strength, deafness or dumbness, or the loss of the faculties of hearing and speech; lunacy, or mental derangement; and finally, what we might have noticed first, demoniacal possession, which was, in itself, a shocking evil, and which caused or aggravated all the other evils, and operated through them.

Verse 40: "*And I besought thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not.*" We read in the 1st verse of this

chapter, that when our Lord sent forth the twelve, "he gave them power and authority over all devils." On this occasion, however, they failed, and that, too, before many who were ready to take every advantage against them. Christ, no doubt, permitted this failure, in order to keep them humble, and sensible of their dependence on him; in order to afford an opportunity of a very signal display of his own power; and in order to punish the unbelief and perverseness which prevailed. He himself, in his reply to the man, opens up, and rebukes, the cause of the failure. "*And Jesus, answering, said, O faithless and perverse generation!*"—in this, he seems to rebuke the sins of all who were concerned, particularly, the want, or the weakness, of faith, and other infirmities, in the man and the nine disciples, and the total unbelief and perverseness of the scribes. "*How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?*" or bear with you, before you come to a right spirit? Though justly displeased, Jesus would not withhold relief when it was so greatly needed, and so earnestly implored. He said to the father of the afflicted youth, "*Bring thy son hither.*" Then it is said, "*As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.*" According to Mark, "he fell down on the ground, and wallowed," or rolled from side to side, "foaming" at the mouth. And this he would, no doubt, continue to do, till his strength being exhausted, he lay motionless, and as if he would expire.

Let us here turn to the following additional, and very interesting, circumstances mentioned by Mark.\* "*And Jesus asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child,*" or from his childhood. The long standing of the disease rendered it more heavy, and the cure more difficult, humanly speaking, and more illustrious. "*And oft times,*" continues the father, "*it hath cast him into the fire, and into the water to destroy him: but if,*" in so bad a case, "*thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us and help us.*" There was here much unbelief, meeting, however, with some faith. The way of speaking was natural, pathetic, and, without professing to do so, yet indirectly involving Christ's honour in the result of the case. Without resenting the insinuation here implied, and without any formal assertion of his own power, our Lord assured him that, if his son should not be cured, it would be owing to want of faith in him (the father), and

\* Mark ix. 21.

not to any want of power in Christ. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The father, then feeling a great struggle in his mind between belief and unbelief, and deeply concerned lest, through a defect in him, his son should fail of being healed, in agony, and with tears, cried out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." He did really believe that Jesus was able to work almost any cure; but, when he considered the aggravated nature of this case, he could not exclude all doubting as to the result; and he addressed a prayer of some faith to the divine Saviour for more faith—a prayer which was favourably answered, as the event proved.

The curiosity of the multitude was, by this time, greatly awakened to see what Jesus would do; and they came running together, and crowding around. On this, "*Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit,*" "saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." This formal, authoritative, and loud command, would call the attention of the multitude, and lead them to connect the cure with our Lord's power and grace. The way in which our Lord here spoke was also, most clearly, a confirmation of the commonly received opinion that this was really a diabolical possession, and not merely disease: had the people been in error as to this, the Faithful and True Witness would never have expressed himself in a manner which necessarily tended to confirm them in the error; he never would have allowed them to believe that Satanic agency was employed where it was not, but would have taken care to have undeceived them. The unclean spirit felt the power of the divine command: "And the spirit cried, and rent" the youth "sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead:"—they saw him in such a swoon, that they thought he would never revive again. "But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose." Matthew says that "the child," or lad, "was cured from that very hour;" he was immediately and thoroughly restored, so that neither the possession nor the diseases returned on him any more. Luke says that Jesus "*healed the child, and delivered him again to his father,*" who would receive him with inexpressible astonishment and joy. Luke also mentions, what might well have been supposed, that "*all*" who were present, "*were amazed at the mighty power of God,*" which this miracle displayed: there is too much

reason, however, to fear that but few of them derived any permanent, or saving benefit from it.

We read, in Matthew, that when the disciples inquired of Christ why they could not cast out that devil, he told them that it was because of their unbelief. In order to work miracles; there was a necessity for what has been called "the faith of miracles;" that is, a full persuasion that the power of God would be present to effect what they wished to perform. When this was wanting, they failed; but the smallest portion of this faith, actually in exercise, was sufficient to perform most wonderful things. "Howbeit," said Jesus, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." This intimated that the possession in question was of a peculiarly strong and aggravated kind, and of such difficulty of removal as was enough to stagger the hopes of those who had not firm faith; and, moreover, that fasting and prayer were excellent means for strengthening their faith, while God, too, was generally pleased to confer peculiar honour on his servants after such seasons of peculiar devotion.

It appears, from the corresponding part of the history, as given by Mark,\* that Jesus, with his disciples, now left the neighbourhood of the mountain on which he was transfigured, and passed through other parts of Galilee, as privately as he could: and also, that he took the opportunity of instructing his disciples confidentially, in the course of his progress. In this connection, we are to notice what is said by Luke: "*But, while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did,*" especially at the last mentioned miracle, "*he,*" having proceeded on the journey, "*said unto his disciples,*" during some part of it, "*Let these sayings sink down into your ears;*"—he wished them to pay particular attention to what he was about to say, that it might not only be heard, but heard with interest, take hold of their memory, and affect their hearts: "*for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.*" He had a short time before, as we read in the 22d verse, given them notice of his approaching sufferings and death; and now he repeats that notice, mentioning particularly his being "delivered," or betrayed, and given over into the power of wicked men. But though, as appears from Matthew and Mark, he used more plain language than this recorded by Luke, and spoke distinctly of his being killed, yet his disciples "*understood*"

\* Mark ix. 30.

*not this saying, and it was hid from them that they perceived it not.*" They had such a general idea of its implying something very dreadful to their beloved Master, as made them, according to Matthew, "exceeding sorry;" but they had no distinct comprehension of it. They could not conceive how such things could come to pass, consistently with their views of the prophecies concerning the glory and the universal and perpetual kingdom of Messiah, and with the expectations of worldly power and grandeur which they thence foolishly entertained. They could not understand how his suffering death could consist with his living and reigning for ever. Hence, some of the Jews afterwards invented the notion of two Messiahs—the one a suffering, and the other a reigning Messiah. *We*, however, can now understand this subject without having recourse to any such error: let us, then, acknowledge him both as our Priest and as our King. As the disciples were, from this cause, very dull of comprehension, so we are reminded that carnal prejudices still blind many to the true meaning and excellence of much that is contained in Scripture, even when the words employed are as plain as possible; and we ought to be on our guard against whatever would veil, from our understandings and hearts, the simplicity and glory of the gospel.

Ignorant as the disciples were of the full meaning of what Jesus had said, they were yet "*afraid to ask him of that saying*:"—afraid lest he should rebuke them for their ignorance, and for their disinclination to entertain the idea of his sufferings, as he had lately rebuked Peter; or rather, afraid lest plain answers to plain questions should dissipate the fond hopes they were cherishing of his, and, through him, of their own earthly grandeur, and confirm them in the most gloomy apprehensions which were beginning to bear in upon their minds. With regard to the Redeemer's death in particular, let it deeply engage *our* attention and our hearts as the most affecting indeed, but the most important and most delightful of all subjects. And let us not be afraid, or on any account disinclined, to examine more thoroughly into any question connected with our safety, or comfort, or duty: but let us, in the way of persevering scriptural study, and earnest prayer, apply to Christ for instruction; and we shall find him a condescending, kind, and able Teacher, who will guide us into all truth by his Word and Spirit, and make us always the happier, the more he causes us experimentally to know of his blessed will.



But, returning to the miracle, the history of which we have already briefly gone over, let us conclude with considering the improvement to be made of it, both in a literal and spiritual sense.

In the first place, this history suggests several useful *hints in regard to literal bodily disease, and especially as to the proper conduct of parents when their children are thus afflicted*. Whether the devil have any influence in producing and aggravating bodily disease at the present day, or not, (and who can say positively that he has no such influence?) it is certain that children, however dear to their parents, and even though they be the only children in their respective families, are often seized with various most distressing complaints. In such cases, their parents feel very deeply by sympathy, perhaps sometimes fully as much as if they themselves were the original sufferers. Hence, this man, when applying in behalf of his son, said, "Have compassion on *us*, and help *us*." Hence, too, Paul said of Epaphroditus, to whom he was tenderly attached, though not related by blood, "He was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." While parents, in such cases, should bring their afflicted children to those whose profession it is to use the natural means for their restoration, they should by no means neglect to bring them to Christ, by prayer, for his divine help. The maladies of their children should bring them to their knees in earnest supplication: they should come to Christ, kneeling down and beseeching him. Nor, in praying for their sick children, should parents forget that, under God, their recovery may turn very much on their prayer being the prayer of faith. There can be no doubt that without a miracle, and in the way of ordinary providential influence, "the prayer of faith" still often saves or restores the sick. When children are thus delivered from distressing and dangerous diseases, their parents should not only feel that joy which springs from the gratification of natural affection, but should also look on them as restored to them by divine power and goodness, and in that view, be full of pious gratitude and praise. They should, as it were, see the Divine Redeemer taking them by the hand, raising them up, and giving them back to them; and they should, as it were, hear him saying, "Take them, and value them, and care for them, as becomes my disciples; set not your heart on them, so as to idolize

them, and devote them not to the world; but let this restoration be a constant memorial of what I have done for you, and train them for me."— If, however, they should not be restored to health, the prayer of faith is still sure of a gracious answer, in some form. Should they be left to linger in trouble, divine consolation and support will be given to them, or to their parents, or both, and a blessing will rest on their souls. Should they die, there will be submission and hope in their death. Many Christian parents, in yielding up an only child to disease and death, have been much comforted and benefited by various scriptural considerations, and especially by bringing the occasion of their grief into the light of the blessed fact, that God so loved them as to give his only begotten Son for them.

In the second place, this history suggests a great variety of *useful ideas with regard to the salvation of the soul, or deliverance from the spiritual bondage of sin and Satan.* It is a reason of much thankfulness that the influence of Satan on the human body is at present under great restraint; for, if it were not so, the world would soon present a most shocking appearance; it must not be forgotten, however, that his influence on the human soul is still very great, perhaps as great as ever. Men are all naturally under his dominion, and influence. Before regeneration, no man belongs to the kingdom of God; but, as there are only two states, all who are not the subjects of God's kingdom, belong to the wicked one. Writing to the Ephesians concerning their state before their conversion, Paul says, "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:" and he adds, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Sinners must not think of imputing their sin to Satan, so as to excuse themselves; for they are evil of themselves, and he only works on the evil which is already in them: "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed." In this way, however, and finding this handle, Satan establishes an undisputed sway over men, and leads them into a most dreadful state of sin and degradation. The state to which he reduces them does, indeed, very closely resemble that of the possessed youth of whom we have been reading. Did

he oftentimes fall into the fire and the water?—they rush into the greatest of all dangers, as if totally unconscious of it, while they expose themselves to the peril of the fire unquenchable, and “fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Was he deaf?—they have ears, but hear not what the Lord says to them in his Word, or what the wise address to them for their good; “they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming ever so wisely.” Was he dumb?—though they speak fluently and keenly of the world, and the world heareth them, they seem to have no use of the faculty of speech for the chief purpose for which it was given—they have nothing to say to God, of God, or for God. Was he lunatic?—they, with regard at least to eternal things, labour under an eclipse of reason, and “madness is in their hearts.” Was he vexed and torn by the demon?—they, when his baneful influence attains a great height, are harassed and driven hither and thither; there is no peace to them—they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. Was he in danger of being destroyed?—their utter destruction is the object at which Satan aims, for “he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Was he thus affected from his childhood?—they were the children, the slaves of Satan by nature, and from their very birth. Frightful, then, as was the case of this youth, theirs, though not to appearance, yet in reality, is much worse.

When the dismal situation of those whom Satan has thus enslaved is properly considered, surely the importance of deliverance from his power must appear to be very great. In particular, and as this case more directly suggests, those parents who themselves have any true religion, will surely be deeply concerned, if they have any children slaves of sin and Satan, and will be most anxious for their deliverance; that is, for their conversion. Deeply indeed will pious parents feel, when they have a profligate child, and when they have reason to say, “This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.” It is true that the law by which all the men of his city were enjoined to stone such a one with stones till he died, is no longer in force under the mild dispensation of the New Testament; dismal, however, is his condition, and much is it to be desired that he should be brought to

his right mind. But, though children may not be openly immoral, enlightened parents will be deeply concerned for them, if they have any reason to think that they are, in any less obvious way, still under the influence of the wicked one. Let parents, who have any such cause of grief, be instructed and encouraged by this history. Let them bring their wicked and careless children to Christ's ministers, whose office it is to labour instrumentally for their spiritual restoration: and, as such human means not only may, but must fail, if not accompanied with divine grace, let them not neglect, at the same time, to bring them to Christ himself—that is, to lay their case before him in fervent supplication. Let them pray for those of their children who are so weak that they cannot, or so wicked that they will not, pray for themselves; and let them endeavour, also, to instruct them, and encourage them to pray. Though many means should fail, and though the reformation of the objects of their tender solicitude should, in human estimation, be almost hopeless, still let them not despair; for Christ says, "Bring them to me."

But this subject is to be considered in a still nearer point of view, and that is, in relation to all of us personally. As already remarked, we see, in the case of this youth before his cure, an humbling, but true, picture of human nature in general, though the most offensive features are more or less prominent in different individuals. If then, we have any correct idea, however feeble, of our real sinful and miserable thralldom, how anxious should we be for personal deliverance from it! With the view of obtaining this emancipation, all the means of grace ought to be diligently used: and, at the same time, we ought to be practically convinced that these means will never succeed of themselves, without the power of Christ, and confidence in that power. The failure of the disciples in this case may be considered as teaching the evil consequences of the want, or weakness, of faith, both in ministers and in people. For our want of success we are ready, it may be, to blame the people, and the people to blame us: but is there not a fault on both sides? Were there more prayer, more mortification to the world, and more simplicity and confidence of faith in us who minister to souls, Christ would honour our ministry with a much greater number of remarkable conversions, and with much greater usefulness to his own disciples. It is good to be diffident of ourselves; but it is not good to be diffident of our Master, and of his grace. When unbelief

bears in upon a minister, it is as when his adversary's sword falls on a combatant's arm, or right eye, "his arm is clean dried up, and his right eye is utterly darkened;" he has not the discernment, nor the heart, nor the power, to achieve any thing of consequence; his Master, being distrusted by him, leaves him shorn of his strength, unnerved and powerless: but when he is confident of the truth, and, in God's own measure, of the success of his cause, then "his bow abides in strength, and the arms of his hands are made strong, by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob:" through faith, out of weakness he is made strong, he waxes valiant in fight, and turns to flight the armies of the aliens; so that of the Lord's enemies, some are brought to willing obedience, and many more are constrained to yield a feigned submission.—Nor is faith less necessary on the part of the people. The cases of some of them may be very bad; but when faith comes, the very worst of them take a favourable turn. Let us all, therefore, expect great things, and aim at great things, on the right ground of humility and faith; and we shall realize great things. According to our faith, so shall it be unto us. Let every sinner seek the commencement of the principle of faith in his soul, where it is not yet implanted, and let every believer seek an increase of faith. Let the Christian profess faith as far as he has it; and let him pray to Christ for more, saying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Let us here be reminded, too, of the necessity and ground for believing that Jesus is both able and willing to save us. This man had some remaining doubt of Christ's ability, and not of his willingness, for he said, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." On the other hand, the leper \* doubted of Christ's willingness, and not of his ability; for he said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." In the one case, Jesus proved his ability by the cure; and in the other, he said, "I will," and the cure also followed. Let us beware, then, of these two different errors, by both of which the honour of Christ and our own interests suffer. Why should we doubt his willingness, his compassion, after all that he has already done and suffered to manifest his love towards us? And why should we doubt his power, after such demonstrations of it as that in this passage? The fact is, that Satan, powerful and daring as he is, cannot stand before him. This was often

\* Luke v. 12.

proved during his abode on earth. This is certain from his atoning death on the cross; for, "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." This is certain, too, from the great design which brought him down from heaven to earth; for, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Most assuredly will he deliver from the thralldom of sin and Satan, all who truly apply to him, however dreadful their condition. It frequently happens, indeed, and it is of importance for those who are under any degree of conviction to be aware of this, that as the devil, at the very time the youth was coming to Jesus, and just before he came out of him, threw him down, and rent him sore—so the mental struggle is the greatest, just when the power of sin and Satan is about to be overthrown, and the reign of grace to be established in the soul. When the adversary sees conviction arising in the souls of sinners, he is exasperated, aware that it is then, if ever, he is to carry the day; and when he feels that he cannot keep them under his dominion, he determines to do all he can to vex them—"he cometh down, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." In alliance with the world, he labours to efface their good impressions by amusements, and enticements, and flatteries, or to overpower them with ridicule, and various kinds of opposition. In such cases (for the struggle is not always so great), the transition from mere natural life to spiritual is something like the transition from natural and spiritual life to eternal; that is, agonies, as of death, are the commencement of a better life. This struggle could never prove favourable in its issue, were it not for the power of divine grace: but, in all cases in which the Saviour begins to work, he effects the rescue of the captives.

Now, would to God that all of you, who are in the dismal state of which we have been speaking, would come to Christ for deliverance! Do you say that, though you cannot deny that you are not what, in strict language, may be called religious, yet you are by no means in so bad a state as this under review? and do you say that it is altogether out of the question to speak of you as slaves to the wicked one? We have no wish to fix on you any such charge, if you can produce satisfactory evidence to the contrary. But, we fear, in granting that you are not, strictly speaking, religious, you have granted, in substance, though you have expressed it in

softer and less alarming terms, everything implied in the charge which you are anxious to repel. Inquire, however, whether the general charge may not be brought home to you, more palpably, under some of the following particulars. Are you addicted to any impurity?—is not that a proof of your being subject to “the unclean spirit?” Are you guilty of envy, or of hatred, which partakes of the guilt of murder, or of violating truth?—then these words are undeniably applicable to you, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” Are you devoted to the things of this world?—then you have yielded to the diabolical temptation: “All these things will I give to you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Have you ever withstood the servants of God, and sought to turn away any from the faith?—so did Elymas, whom Paul declared to be full of subtilty, and all mischief, a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness. Are you wilfully and habitually guilty of any sin?—“He that committeth sin is of the devil.” \* Are you wayside, careless, and unimpressed hearers of the word?—“The devil cometh and taketh away the word out of your hearts, lest you should believe and be saved.” Is the glory of the gospel hid from your eyes, and its power unknown to your hearts?—“If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not.” Or, under the cloak of religion, have you betrayed the Son of man?—remember who it was that put it into the heart of Judas to betray him. Are you, with the name of Christians and a fair profession, formalists and hypocrites?—“I know,” saith Christ, “the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” Consider these points well; and see whether you cannot find, in some of them, what convicts you. Your invisible enemy approaches, and makes good his influence, in various ways adapted to your different dispositions; and it is even said that Satan is sometimes “transformed into an angel of light.” But, to bring the matter to the shortest issue, you were Satan’s subjects by nature; that is, you were guilty and depraved, and therefore his fit instruments, and unless you have been entirely changed, you are his subjects still.

\* See also 1 John iii. 10.

Should a struggle arise while he seeks to retain you, and you strive to escape from his power, beware of yielding the contest ; for, if you do, your last state will be worse than the first. Whatever exertions he may make, and stir up others to make, to keep you back, do you come to Christ, beseeching him to look upon you and help you ; and he will give you deliverance. May God give you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth ; and that you may recover yourselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

How thankful ought those of you to be, who, having come to Christ, are delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan ! Give thanks unto the Father, “ who hath delivered you from the power of darkness, and hath translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Though the enemy shall never again entirely prevail over you, he may return after a season, and obtain a partial advantage. Remember, that, in giving the Corinthians a certain caution, Paul says, “ Lest Satan should get an advantage of us ; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Maintain the superiority you have gained ; maintain it in the way of humility, of avoiding temptation, of faith, and of prayer. “ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”—“ Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Thus the Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly ; and you shall be more than conquerors through him who hath loved you.



## LECTURE XLIX.

LUKE IX. 46-50.

“Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 47. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, 48. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. 49. ¶ And John answered, and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. 50. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.”

THIS passage contains two different subjects—the settlement of the question as to precedence in the kingdom of God—and the way in which one who cast out devils in Jesus’ name, though not of the company of the apostles, nor attending on the Saviour’s ministry, was to be viewed and treated.

We have here, first, the settlement of the question as to precedence in the kingdom of God: “*Then there arose a reasoning among them,*” that is, among the disciples, “*which of them should be greatest.*” The parallel passages are in Matthew xviii. 1, and Mark ix. 33. Referring to Mark, we find that the dispute had arisen during their journey towards Capernaum, and that our Lord called them to account for it, in a house in that town, saying, “What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace,” being unwilling, no doubt, and ashamed, to confess the truth; “for, by the way, they disputed among themselves who should be greatest:” or, as it is in Matthew, “who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Now, in all probability, it was a radical mistake as to the nature of that kingdom which chiefly led to this vain controversy. The disciples were looking for the establishment, by Christ, of a temporal kingdom on earth, by the overthrow of the enemies of their nation, and his assumption

of visible and kingly pomp and power; and it was with the utmost difficulty, and long after this, that they were brought to understand that his kingdom was to consist in the reign of the gospel in the heart and life of believers on earth, and in the future glory and happiness of his saints in heaven. Thence it was, that instead of seriously inquiring what were the qualifications necessary to being at all members of his kingdom, or church, here and hereafter, and instead of inquiring how they might become not only members, but eminent members—which inquiry might have been proper and useful—they entered into a foolish and hurtful dispute as to which of them, personally considered, should occupy the chief place under Christ, in his temporal reign, on which they were fondly calculating: and, if their views, at this moment, did at all include spiritual and heavenly things, they were very confused, and characterized by most unbecoming ambition and pride. Though we are not told what arguments any of them urged to establish his claim to be advanced to the office of prime minister in the expected new government, it is not difficult to conceive what some of them might have said. Thus, James the Younger, and Jude, were nearly related to Jesus, and might have calculated on that connexion securing for them his peculiar favour. Peter might have rested on his great zeal, and the distinguished notice which Jesus had taken of him on various occasions. John might have looked forward, with high expectations, as the beloved disciple. Andrew might have said, “I was first called, and therefore expect to be first promoted.” Even Judas might have said, “I carry the bag, and must therefore be surely appointed at least chief treasurer.”

Whatever may have been the arguments they advanced, no wonder that they hesitated to acknowledge to Jesus that they had been engaged in such a discussion. Jesus, however, “*perceived the thought of their heart,*” and heard everything they had said, as they supposed, in secret; and their attempt at concealment was vain. Though they held their peace at first, yet we find, from Matthew, that they at last confessed, and even put a question to our Lord, with the view of having the dispute settled. He did settle the dispute; but in a very different way from what any of them expected. He “*took a child and set him by him,*” in the midst of the twelve whom he had called together; and “when he had taken him up in his arms,” \* he directed

\* Mark.

their attention to him as a sensible sign; and then gave an authoritative, verbal decision of the controversy.

But, that we may have a full account of what our Lord now said, let us take in what we read in Matthew. Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." This declaration was peculiarly applicable to the state of the disciples' minds at that time; and yet, it embodied a momentous truth of universal application—a mode of teaching which Christ very often employed.

Let us consider how little children furnish an apt emblem of conversion, or rather, of those who are being converted. It is not as to their being absolutely holy and innocent, and not standing in need of pardon and regeneration; for, the very reverse of this is the fact: but, it is as to some traits in their disposition, when they are viewed comparatively with unconverted adults. "Though not innocent, strictly speaking, they are comparatively harmless; as the young, even of the most ferocious animals, are at first innoxious, but soon begin to discover the nature of that stock from which they spring."\*

More particularly, and in reference to those qualifications in which the disciples now showed that they were very deficient, and yet of which we must all be possessed, if we are to be saved;—little children are *comparatively humble*. Whatever seeds of evil may lurk in their minds, it is almost impossible that they should imagine themselves equal to those who are grown up. They are almost unavoidably sensible of their inferiority and dependence. And this is the state of mind towards God to which we, as sinners, must be brought. Let us not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think; but let us think soberly. Let us not imagine that we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; but let us feel and confess that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Let us acknowledge and deplore our utter guilt, condemnation, and depravity: and let us rely on the divine mercy and aid, which are ready to be extended to us, through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Intimately connected with this disposition of humility, is a disposition of *teachableness*; and of this, too, children are, in a considerable degree, possessed. Aware that their parents

\* Scott.

and teachers surpass them in knowledge, they look to them, that they may learn of them ; and they are, at first, very much disposed to believe and receive, without gainsaying, and without doubt, whatever they tell them. In this, too, we mark an essential feature in the character of true converts, in relation to God. They are no longer wise in their own conceit ; but, as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. They look to their heavenly Teacher, both for information in those things which it is necessary for them to know and to believe, and also for grace to open their understandings, and to enable them to believe. Thus, they become the spiritual babes, to whom the Lord reveals those great things which he hides from those who are wise and prudent in their own eyes.

Once more, here, children are *comparatively free from worldliness and ambition*. This world does not yet obviously appear to be their idol. They do not form plans, or labour, for the riches and the honours of public life. They readily associate with their inferiors, and do not aim at surpassing competitors for exalted stations. Now, in this, the disciples appear to have been very deficient, though the disposition must be cultivated by all true Christians. They must be on their guard against whatever may amount to a spirit of worldliness, sinful emulation, and envy. This is that child-like disposition of weanedness from the world, which is so beautifully described in the 131st Psalm : " Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty ; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother : my soul is even as a weaned child."

It is too true that children soon begin to show dispositions very different from these, and are ready, from the innate depravity of their hearts, to be lifted up with pride, and to follow worldly maxims, and seek worldly pre-eminence above all things : but it is plain, that while they are very young, they are characterized by comparative humility, teachableness, and indifference to the world ; and therefore, in so far, manifest those dispositions which are fit emblems of the graces which constitute the very essence of true Christianity. We see, then, how our Lord here teaches, both that without these graces, in some degree, men cannot be the subjects of his kingdom at all ; and also, that the

more believers are distinguished for these graces, the higher rank they now bear in the Church below, and the greater will be their happiness and glory, at last, in heaven above.

But, in addition to this declaration concerning the necessity of being converted, and becoming like little children, our Lord said to his disciples, as it is related here by Luke, "*Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me.*" Jesus did not mean to confine the application of this saying to the particular child then in his arms, or to any child, or any children, in the literal sense: this appears, not only from the reason of things, but also from the way in which the saying is given by Matthew: "Whoso shall receive one such child in my name, receiveth me." It is, no doubt, a duty to be kind to children literally so called: but Christ here refers chiefly to little children in the spiritual sense; that is, to those humble ones who have become his subjects—to his disciples, all of whom he calls his "little children," and "children;" as when he says, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you"—"Children, have ye any meat?" Whosoever shall "receive such"—that is, shall listen to them, if they are teachers, and whether they are teachers or not, shall entertain them, and be kind to them, for Christ's sake—he declares that he will look on such reception as the reception of himself in his mediatorial office, and such kindness as if it were shown to himself personally. And he adds, "*Whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me.*" Such a reception of the Son, is to receive the Father. There is no true religion except that which acknowledges and receives Christ as the Saviour. "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him."—"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also. Very nearly parallel to this passage in Luke, and illustrative of its whole bearing, are the words of Christ \* to the apostles, when he sent them forth: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." In like manner, the Redeemer

\* Matt. x. 40.

will say to his people, in the great day of judgment, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Perhaps, the connexion of this declaration with that recorded in Matthew respecting the necessity of being converted, and becoming little children, may have been this:—the disciples may have been fearing that if they became so humble as Christ required, they would be almost universally rejected and despised; and it may have been in order to dissipate that fear, that he assured them that some would receive them well, and that he would mark such reception of them with great approbation, as being virtually the reception of himself. And so, also, on the contrary, as appears from Matthew, Jesus thus expressed himself with regard to those who should reject any of his disciples, and offend them, or cast a stumbling-block in their way: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Drowning was one mode of inflicting capital punishment in some ancient nations; and, in order to secure their sinking, the criminals had sometimes heavy stones tied about their necks, or were rolled up in sheets of lead. Hence, these words of our Lord were a proverbial way of expressing dreadful and certain destruction. May such rejection, and unworthy treatment of Christ's ministers and people, and, of course, of Christ himself, be far from us! Let us also consider well whether we have that evidence of our having received Christ himself, which consists in having received his messengers, and in loving, and being kind to his people for his sake. Whose company do we most desire, and most relish? Are we most happy to visit in their houses, and to receive into ours, and in any place to meet the profligate, or at least, the gay and the worldly? Or, do we, with most satisfaction, welcome and go to meet those meek and lowly ones who, having received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk in him? Let us not be deceived: according as we voluntarily cleave to the one party, or to the other, here, so shall we be assorted by the Judge of all hereafter.

Upon the whole, the sum of what our Lord taught, on this occasion, is contained in the last clause of the 48th verse: "*He that is least among you all, the same shall be great.*" Instead of fixing, by name, on the disciple who was to be the greatest—instead of encouraging the worldli-

ness and ambition, or the spiritual pride, of any of them, Jesus declared that whosoever of his disciples should be the least in his own estimation, and most remarkable for condescension and humility, the same should stand highest in his esteem, and be most distinguished by marks of his favour.

On these three verses, we may yet make the following additional observations.

First of all, *these verses are quite conclusive against the alleged supremacy of the apostle Peter.* If our Lord had already raised him, or if it had been his intention to raise him at any future period, to any such primacy as the Romanists pretend, our Lord could not have remained silent with regard to the subject on this occasion. The disciples had been disputing among themselves, and they had at last asked Jesus who of them should be the greatest: but instead of designating Peter, or any other apostle, as the chief, he gives such an answer as quashes the inquiry, and is totally inconsistent with the idea of any such superiority, and plainly subversive of the Papal system.

Here the opportunity for teaching Peter's supremacy was direct and inviting, had the Saviour intended any thing of the kind; and yet he not only teaches no such thing, but teaches the contrary. This argument is direct and plain; whereas the reasoning on the other side is indirect, inferential, and easily set aside. Satisfactory, however, as this argument is in itself, it acquires additional force from the circumstance that, as appears from the order in the Gospel according to Matthew, our Lord expressed himself in this way *after* he had said to Peter,\* "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church;"—"and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Now, whatever may have been the exact and full meaning of these words, that they did not imply the official superiority of Peter over the rest of the apostles, is clear from the way in which, some time after, our Lord expressed himself, as recorded in the verses which we have just been considering.

Again, this part of the passage is *subversive of the idea of any temporal, personal, visible reign of Christ with his people on earth.* The great body of the Jews erred in expecting Messiah to appear in that way, and thence rejected Jesus and his spiritual kingdom. Even the disciples themselves were here looking for a temporal reign, and contending for

\* Matt. xvi. 18.

the chief place under his government: and it was with difficulty, and only 'after a long course of instruction, and experience, that they were driven from the groundless expectation. After the lessons read to us in their errors, we shall exhibit a still more lamentable proof of weakness of judgment, and inattention to the general scope and just interpretation of Scripture than they exhibited, if we do not perceive that Christ's kingdom is not now, and never will be, of this world, in that sense, and that he reigns in the best, and noblest, and truly scriptural sense, when he reigns, as he does already reign to some extent, and as he will at last reign universally, over the hearts of men, by his grace on earth, and where he reigns with them in glory, in heaven.

For ourselves, too, let us remember the *necessity of conversion*. There is a necessity, in order to salvation, for that first, great, and general turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, which is most commonly called conversion, and of which Peter speaks, when he says, "Repent ye and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And, though we may have been thus converted, we still need, in order to spiritual prosperity, that conversion which consists in turning from any partial errors and sins into which we may have fallen. Peter was a believer long before he denied his Master; but still his Master said to him, in reference to that latter period of his history, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Farther, we infer from these verses, that as there are *different degrees of estimation in which Christ's people are held by him in this life, so there are different degrees of happiness and glory conferred on them by him in the next*, and that both correspond to the real spiritual excellence of character to which they now attain. This is plainly implied in our Lord's speaking of who should be "great," and "the greatest," whatever partial errors the disciples may have been labouring under. It is no sufficient objection to this to argue as if the consideration of the meritorious cause of salvation, or the righteousness of Christ, being absolutely perfect, and the same in all, the salvation itself must therefore be in every respect exactly the same. Most true it is that, as the title is the same in itself, all believers are equally *entitled* to admission into heaven; they are all equally justified, and, in fact, they do all equally and completely enter into heaven. Nay, heaven is the same, in itself, to all who



enter into it. They are all in one place, one country, one city—one house. They are all blessed in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and in the society of the same saints and angels; and they all serve God day and night in his temple. Still, it will not follow from all this, that their happiness is equal. It will not follow from the imputation of Christ's righteousness, unless we adopt the very erroneous opinion, that his righteousness is imputed not only for the justification, but for the sanctification of his people, and that hence their sanctification is out of themselves, and in all cases the same, and incapable of any increase. Nor will it follow from the sameness of heaven in itself, unless it be true that the same things always affect different persons exactly in the same way, and to the same degree. That this is not true is abundantly plain. Thus, a number of persons will be affected with higher degrees of pleasure by the same beautiful view, or the same exquisite music, or the same admirable book, or the same scientific discovery, or indeed, by any one interesting thing; according as their genius and taste, their previous preparation, and degree of culture, enable them more completely to enter into the spirit of what may engage their attention. In like manner, we must conclude that the same rule will hold good in heaven.

Nor is there any solidity in the objection, that this doctrine countenances self-righteousness, as it does not imply that any are indebted to themselves for their superior degrees of happiness any more than for their superior degrees of holiness. All is of grace: and God alone makes them to differ.—And then, it is not difficult to perceive how the happiness of heaven, instead of being destroyed, or lessened, by the diversity in question, must be established and enhanced. Circumstantial variety seems to be as necessary as substantial harmony, to the existence of interesting society. Suppose no difference existed between the state of any of the saints in heaven; suppose they all had the same degree of knowledge, and spiritual excellence, and resemblance to the divine image; suppose the appearance, and reflection, and feelings, and glory, and enjoyments of them all were exactly the same: what an insipid state of society would that be, in so far as human beings are concerned! To know one of them, would be to know them all; and indeed, knowing himself, no individual would have any inducement to cultivate the acquaintance of any other individual. Such a state of things would hardly deserve to be

called society. The saints would be, as it were, so many duplicates of each other; and none could be the wiser, or the better, or the happier, for his neighbour. It is not thus, we may be sure, that the God of infinite wisdom has determined that the celestial society shall be constituted. They are all intelligent, all holy, all glorious, and all happy : yet they exhibit endless variety, so that every one will be imparting and receiving pleasure and instruction, and will be constantly beholding around him something new and interesting; and thus, the whole system will be improving and brightening for ever.— And this is what Scripture plainly teaches : “ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead.”

Now, the obvious practical bearing of this doctrine is as a motive with believers to diligence in the divine life. There is a contracted selfishness which reason and Scripture equally condemn : but there is an enlightened regard to self-interest which they both approve, and which it is a mere affectation of disinterestedness to undervalue. The doctrine is, that, to those who are in a safe state, the reward of grace shall be, according to the progress they make in spiritual excellence : and the corresponding feeling should surely be to desire to increase more and more, and abound in all the fruits of righteousness. Nor, must we fail to observe the high place which is here given to the particular grace of *humility*. It is found in the regenerated soul from the first, and it is the brightest ornament of the most exalted Christian at the last. Let us ever remember the words of our Lord : “ He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Once more here, let this part of the sacred history put all Christians on their *guard against all unseemly disputes, such as that into which the disciples are here represented as having fallen*. The reproof they received from Christ for having thus contended while they were on their journey to Capernaum, may justly be considered as an admonition to believers, through the whole journey of life, not “ to fall out by the way.” Contentions between Christians, even when the matter in dispute is a proper one, are very unbecoming on the side of the party in the wrong, and too often very unbecoming as to the manner in which they are conducted on both sides : but those contentions are more particularly scandalous and hurtful, in which they contend for pre-

eminence in worldly distinction, or in reputation for piety. Only by pride cometh such contention ; and, alas ! even good men are far from being superior to its influence. Pride is so deeply rooted in the human mind, that it is not entirely eradicated in the renewed : it still lurks in their breasts, and sometimes breaks out in their conversation and conduct. They are known, at times, to contend for superiority, rather than for truth and righteousness—for superiority in argument, or influence, or temporal honour, or fame for religious attainments. It is also very far from seemly for one Christian to fix on another as an exclusive favourite, and insist, to the disparagement of every one else, that he is the first in ability and character, and will be the first in the future reward. It is still more unseemly and offensive to others, as it must be still more hurtful to himself, if indeed, it be at all consistent with the existence of true piety, for a man to fix on himself as the favourite whom he is to blazon and exalt, and to say, or to be known to think as if he would say, “ Who is equal to me ? How much do I excel in goodness of heart, knowledge, zeal, exertion, usefulness, and every thing that is respectable ! Such a one may now seem to be outstripping me, but I shall rise above him at last ; for, to whom will the king delight to do honour more than to myself ? ”—We are struck with the odiousness of this spirit when it goes to such an excess as this : let us, then, be on our guard against all approaches to it. In whatever degree it may exist, or however much it may be concealed from men, Jesus, our Master, knows it well ; and it is ever most offensive in his sight. If it exist at all in the heart of any of us, may the Lord bring it to our notice by the light of his Spirit, and the awakened energy of our conscience, that we may be ashamed of it, and confess it, and forsake it. Let us conscientiously attend to these scriptural directions : “ Seekest thou great things for thyself ? seek them not.”—“ Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.”—“ Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”

But let us proceed to consider, shortly, the other subject of this passage, as contained in the 49th and 50th verses. “ *And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not : for he that is not against us is for us.* ” “ John

answered and said,"—this mode of expression does not here imply that any question was put to John by our Lord ; it merely intimates that the apostle addressed him thus as he was going on with his instructions in the way mentioned just before. Probably, what Jesus had been saying with regard to the reception due even to the weakest disciples, reminded John of what he and the other disciples had done in the case which he describes. Whether he was now beginning to suspect that they had therein done wrong, or was looking for commendation, or was merely desirous of receiving explicit directions as to the proper way of proceeding in such a case, does not clearly appear. Nor have we any particular information as to who the man spoken of was, or what was his history, or what opportunities he had enjoyed of being instructed in the gospel. It is not unlikely that he was a follower of John the Baptist, and had been so far informed by him, and perhaps also by occasionally hearing Christ and his apostles preach (though he did not regularly accompany them), as to have been led to believe in Jesus so as to work miracles in his name, and by his power. As to his not following Christ habitually, that may have been owing to his not being yet prepared to leave all for his sake, or to the smallness of his attainments in knowledge and grace, or to his not being expressly called to follow, or accompany him in the literal sense. But, however that may have been, as he proceeded in the name, and sought to do all to the honour of Christ, there is no difficulty in seeing how the gift of miracles might have been imparted to him, in perfect consistence with the glory of God and the interest of the gospel. This man's miracles are evidently spoken of as real miracles, and not as pretended miracles, or abortive attempts. This was not a case like that of the seven sons of Sceva, vagabond Jews, exorcists, of whom we read in the 19th chapter of the Acts, who took it upon them to call over them who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, but were foiled in their endeavour. This man actually performed miraculous cures.

When the apostles saw him so employed, they "forbade him," they commanded him to desist. This was very rash, and their rashness led them into a great error. They ought, at least, to have consulted Christ, before taking this upon them. John honestly told Jesus the reason of their forbidding the man: "We forbade him, because he followeth not with us." He was not one of the apostles, nor even one who

usually accompanied them: they, therefore, seemed to think that his working of miracles was derogatory from the honour of the apostles, and an usurpation of their office—that, in short, he had no proper authority to proceed in that way, and that he ought therefore to be restrained. This was not unlike what was said to Jesus himself, by the chief priests and the elders, in the temple, “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” In both instances, the miracles themselves were sufficient authority.

Jesus said, “Forbid him not”—do not interfere with him—let him go on. For this direction he assigns two reasons. One of these reasons is stated only by Mark (ix. 39), “For there is no man who shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.” It is true that the power of working miracles was no certain proof of saving faith and a state of grace, for, Christ himself says,\* “Many will say unto me, in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” But, working miracles in Christ’s name always implied at least a profession of faith in him, and was quite inconsistent with openly opposing the gospel, and reviling him as an impostor, and a blasphemer. There was, therefore, no evil to be apprehended to his cause from the miracles of this man; nay, they evidently tended to forward it.

The other reason given by our Lord in support of his decision, is recorded both by Mark and by Luke, and, according to the latter evangelist, in the passage before us, stands thus: “For, he that is not against us is for us,” or on our part. It will occur, at once, that this declaration, though not exactly the opposite, is the converse, of our Lord’s other declaration in Luke xi. 23: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.” The inconsistency is only in appearance, however, for both declarations are true and important in the connexion and sense in which they are respectively introduced, and intended to be applied. In the case in the 11th chapter, the reference is to the difference between the friends of Christ and the friends of Beelzebub—the supporters and the opposers of the gospel. *There* there can be no neutrality:

\* Matt. vii. 22.

those who do not there rank among the Saviour's friends, must be reckoned among his enemies. *Here*, however, the reference is to the difference between the very enlightened and consistent friends of Christ, and his less enlightened and less consistent friends, or, at least, professing friends. The latter, though inferior to the former, do yet support his cause; they are far from acting in opposition to him, either professedly or really; they are not against him, but for him: and therefore, instead of being renounced and disheartened, they are to be acknowledged and encouraged, and to be assisted to the attainment of greater propriety and consistency of Christian conduct. The disciples certainly discovered on this occasion a want of proper liberality, and something of a spirit of envy. Their conduct was very like that of Joshua,\* who, notwithstanding all his noble qualities, erred in the case of Eldad and Medad. When these two men prophesied in the camp, without having gone out to the tabernacle, Joshua said, "My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"

Let us inquire, in conclusion, *how this portion of sacred history is applicable to ourselves*. Without further reference to what was miraculous, we may view the general spirit which our Lord here inculcates, as deserving the careful attention of different denominations of Christians, in their manner of judging and treating each other. If this genuine liberality and charity were more attended to, much heart-burning and mischief in private society, and in the Church, would be prevented. When we think, or speak, of the state of private individuals, we ought not to suppose, or affirm, that grace is confined to those of our own party—to those who walk exactly with us; nor ought we to hold it as certain that in no instance is the saving grace of God communicated to those who have not the full benefit of the Christian ordinances. And, with regard to those who preach the word, we ought not to suppose that the divine blessing is confined to the ministrations of those who belong to our own branch of the Church: nor are we to presume to "forbid," or seek authoritatively to stop, those who do not labour in our own most approved way, or even in the most scriptural way. Even where the light may be but partial, and the motives mixed, we are not to interfere in

\* Numb. xi. 24.

any such way; but we are to rejoice if the truth, in any considerable measure, be published, and good, in any degree, be done. This is certainly the spirit recommended by the example of the apostle Paul.\* "Some," says he, "preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or of truth, Christ is preached: and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."—It is, no doubt, of much importance, that all things connected with religion should be done "decently and in order," and in particular, that there should be a regular induction into the ministry; but, let us take heed of proceeding in such a way, in support of what we conceive to be the unity of the Church, as would prevent the spread of the truth. If not even the apostles were allowed to stop this man, much less can any ecclesiastical, or civil authority, now be justified in any similar attempt.—We may also here remark, that the desire of pre-eminence for ourselves, or for our party, is very apt to lead us to reject good men. The apostle John says, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, receiveth us not."

It is of great importance, too, for real Christians to act on the principle that "those who are not against us are for us." We should always cheerfully acknowledge, and prudently avail ourselves of, whatever, in others, is favourable to the truth, even though they may not be so far advanced as is to be wished; and we should remember that it is foolish in itself, and hurtful to religion, to drive away from us, and to irritate into open, direct, and declared opposition, those who may be, in so far, promising well. Besides, if it be so that certain persons are very deficient in light and consistency, what do reason and Scripture prescribe as the likely way to gain them entirely over? Not surely to disown them, and to attack them without discrimination, and without mercy; but to deal kindly with them, to lay hold on whatever is right in their views, and to take whatever just principles they acknowledge in common with ourselves, as a groundwork for further calm discussion, and as the means of leading them on to renounce whatever is wrong, and to supply whatever is deficient in their views and con-

\* Phil. i. 15.

duct. In like manner, for the general prosperity of the Church, it is certainly of great importance that all good men, without giving up any thing they deliberately consider to be scriptural, or sacrificing their consistency, should unite in forwarding objects in which they are agreed.

I shall only add, that these truly enlightened and truly charitable and liberal views, should not be abused to that spurious liberality which is nothing but latitudinarianism, or indifference to all opinions and practices whatever. As to private persons, though saving grace is not tied down to any particular forms, it is not to be calculated on out of the visible Church, or when men are not walking according to scriptural order. And as to public teachers, though good may be done by some who have no regular outward call to the ministry, that does not justify needless irregularities in this way; for none can now warrantably lay claim to any miraculous call. May the great Head of the Church greatly increase, throughout the world, the number both of preachers and of hearers who are really on his side: and may he also greatly increase their light, and zeal, and holiness. May the Churches have rest, and be edified, and, walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, be multiplied.



## LECTURE L.

## LUKE IX. 51-56.

“ And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52. And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55. But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”

As Luke is the only one of the four evangelists who relates this part of the sacred history, we have no direct assistance from any of the other three in settling its time, or other circumstances, more particularly. Commentators are generally agreed that it is here introduced by Luke, not in the order of time, but (as is often done in other cases, and as is also a very natural arrangement,) because of its similarity to what he had been relating immediately before. He had been telling how the apostles were for restraining a certain man from working miracles, because he did not move in their company; and now he introduces an account of the still greater extremity to which some of them were for proceeding against certain Samaritans. There are difficulties, however, and differences of opinion, as to the exact time here referred to. None can suppose that this took place during our Lord's last progress from Galilee to Jerusalem, after his resurrection, and immediately before his ascension: for then it could hardly have been introduced so near the beginning of the Gospel; besides, he did not present himself so publicly at that time, nor had he any sufferings or difficulties then to apprehend, which it required any courage to face. Though some are for referring this occurrence to his going up to the feast of Tabernacles mentioned in the 7th chapter of John, the circumstances of his performing that journey secretly after his brethren had gone up, of its not

being his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem before his death, and of that feast being more than half a year before his death, are unfavourable to that opinion. That this was not his journey up just before the Passover at which he was crucified, is certain, for then he went from Ephraim, and passed through Jericho; so that his way did not lie through the country of Samaria, in which this occurrence took place.\* Hence, it is probable that our Lord was now going up to the feast of the Dedication of the Temple, of which we read in John x. 22. Nor is the expression "*the time was come*," or the days being fulfilled, "that he should be received up," to be so rigidly interpreted as not to admit of the supposition of any interval at all; for similar modes of expression are used to signify, in general, that a time referred to was drawing near. Indeed, the circumstance of his not again returning to Galilee before his death, may, of itself, have been sufficient to justify this expression.

There seems no good reason to doubt that the first and most obvious idea which the other expression, being "*received up*," suggests, is the right one, namely, Christ's ascension, as the glorious termination of his sufferings and death. It is in this sense that the word is used, in the account of his ascension, in Mark xvi. 19: "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." The same word is used, in the same sense, thrice in the 1st chapter of the Acts of the Apostles,† and also in the close of the noble climax in the 3d chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy: "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

There was an exact period fixed in the counsels of heaven, when Messiah was to die, and rise, and ascend. He knew that period well. He foresaw, too, all its circumstances, all its sorrows, and all its joys. Desirous to glorify his Father, to save sinners, and to receive the due reward of his humiliation, instead of shrinking back, or being afraid, he proceeded with resolution, and would not be dissuaded—he bent his course in a certain direction, and would not turn aside from it—"he stedfastly set," he confirmed, or fixed, "*his face to Jerusalem*." This reminds us of the

\* See John xi. 54; Luke xix. 1; and Doddridge's Note.

† Verses 2, 11, 22.

mode of expression employed in the 50th chapter of Isaiah, in a passage prophetic of Christ, and descriptive of this very feature of his character: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back."—"For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." So also, in describing how he had qualified Ezekiel for his office, the Lord said to him,\* "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."

Having adopted this resolution, Jesus did not take any circuitous course, in order to avoid the country of the Samaritans; but, as it lay directly in his way, he proceeded right through it, accompanied by the twelve, at least, if not by other disciples. Having to pass through "*a village of the Samaritans*" (what that village was we have no means of determining, nor would the knowledge of it be of any importance), "*he sent messengers before his face*"—he sent some of his attendants on before himself and the main body of his disciples, "*to make ready for him*"—to give notice of his approach, with a considerable number of his followers, that their coming might not excite surprise, or give offence, or be inconvenient—to secure their immediate admittance into the village—and to have some place prepared, where they might have suitable lodging and refreshment. This is usual and proper, when any numerous party are travelling together. Had this proposal been favourably entertained by the inhabitants, an extensive and acceptable opportunity of publishing to them the way of salvation would have been afforded, and the result might have been very happy. Thus, John the Baptist was Christ's messenger in a very emphatical sense, to prepare the way before him; and thus, as we find in the beginning of the next chapter, Jesus sent the seventy, "two and two before his face, into every city and place whither he himself would come."

But the inhabitants of the village "*did not receive him.*" They would not admit him into their village, or, at least, into any of their houses; they would not show him common hospitality; and of course they would not listen to his instructions—so completely did prejudice blind them to the

\* Ezek. iii. 8.

duties of ordinary civility, and to their own best interests. Now, there is hardly anything of which men are guilty, which is so bad that no kind of a reason can be produced for it: these Samaritans, accordingly, had their reason, such as it was, for their conduct on this occasion. Their reason was, "*Because his face was as though he would go*"—his face was directed, he plainly appeared to be on his way—"to Jerusalem."

An antipathy of great strength, and of long standing, existed between the Jews and Samaritans. About fifty years after the revolt of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the city of Samaria was built by their king, Omri, on the hill of Shemar. This city became the capital of the kingdom of the ten tribes, or of Israel, as distinguished from Judah, and, in process of time, gave name to the surrounding country and its inhabitants. When Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, took Samaria, and carried away a great part of its inhabitants into captivity, he replaced them by Babylonians, and other idolaters, who, intermixed with the Israelites still remaining in the land, joined the worship of idols with the worship of the true God. This mixed race were called Samaritans. On the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and their beginning to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, the Samaritans, as we read in the 4th chapter of Ezra, wished to join them in the work, and to be admitted to religious fellowship with them. But, as they were a mixed race, and, though they might have, to a certain extent, honoured Jehovah, as they were far from being truly and scripturally religious, and as it even appeared that, with all their professions of friendship, they would have, in reality, impeded the work, their offer was refused. On this, they, without disguise, set themselves to thwart the Jews in their pious undertaking. And when their efforts in this way proved ineffectual, they, some time after, built another for themselves on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans regarded only the five books of Moses, and paid no attention to the other inspired books of the Old Testament. Though they wished to be considered as the worshippers of Jehovah, their corruptions, both in theory and in practice, were very great; and they gave a most shameful proof of their impiety, when, in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the persecutor of the Jews, and the profaner of the true temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem, they voluntarily dedicated their temple to Jupi-

ter. On the whole, their worship was so schismatical and corrupt, that the Jews were right in looking on it as sinful and idolatrous, and in refusing to hold *religious* communion with them. The Jews, however, generally speaking, carried this feeling to an unreasonable and uncharitable length; and the Samaritans also, on their part, appear to have indulged an unrestrained dislike for the Jews. The woman of Samaria said to our Lord, at the well near Sychar, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?" and it is added, "For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." This does not signify that the Jews would not deal with the Samaritans in the way of buying and selling; for they were accustomed to deal in that way with heathen nations. It means that they had no *friendly* intercourse\* with them, no intercourse in the way, for example, of borrowing or lending, of bestowing or receiving any favour. The Lord Jesus disregarded all such traditional customs, as they had no authority in Scripture, or in reason, and were even subversive of common humanity. The inhabitants of this Samaritan village, however, following out their usual prejudice, refused to receive Christ and his apostles, their habitual prejudice being probably strengthened and irritated by the circumstance of these Jews being on their way to keep one of the feasts at the temple of Jerusalem, which was a plain condemnation of the schismatical, and partly idolatrous, worship at Samaria.

The conduct of these Samaritans, in refusing to receive Christ and his disciples, was, indeed, very sinful; but the transport of rage into which that conduct threw his disciples, or at least some of his disciples, and the proposal which it provoked them to make, were most lamentable and most unchristian. That John, especially, whose usual temper was so gentle and so affectionate, should have been so forward in this affair, is very strange, and ought to be considered as an instructive warning of the necessity for the most charitable and meek to be constantly on their guard against the first risings of prejudice, passion, and false zeal,

\* Οὐ συγγενῆσαι. The English version, "have no dealings," is rather too strong. Neither Beza's translation, "non utuntur," nor the Vulgate, "non co-utuntur," brings out the exact meaning. Lightfoot produces several quotations to prove that the Jews had intercourse with the Samaritans and heathens, of a certain kind, but no friendly intercourse. Lexicographers, too, furnish ground for this interpretation of the work συγγενῆσαι, as they render it, not only "commercium habeo," but also, "una cum aliis utor, familiariter utor aliquo, mutuo accipio, utendum rogo."

lest the fierce spirit obtain the mastery over them.—“*And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*” There were here, without doubt, a conviction of the miraculous power which was ready to bear testimony to Christ, a zeal of a certain kind for his honour, a burst of indignation at the unworthy treatment shown to him, a submission to his will (“Wilt thou?”)—and a reference to scriptural example. But, notwithstanding all these fair appearances, the proposal betrayed great blindness and rashness. Jesus had already been often rejected and insulted by Jews, but had never had recourse to any very severe measure against them, nor had his disciples ever proposed any: these Samaritans, though greatly to blame, were not so much to blame as those Jews who had enjoyed greater opportunities: there was, therefore, something very dreadful in the proposal to reduce this whole village to ashes, and to destroy its inhabitants, without distinction. As to the example they produced from the Old Testament in defence of their proposal, it was by no means applicable to the case in hand. The circumstances referred to are recorded in the 1st chapter of the Second Book of Kings, in the account given of what Elijah, as an instrument in the hand of the Lord, did to two different companies of men who were sent to seize him, by Ahaziah, king of Israel. “The king sent unto Elijah a captain of fifty with his fifty: and he went up to him; (and, behold, he sat on the top of a hill;) and he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.” In the same manner, another captain and other fifty men, sent out for the same purpose, were consumed. There were, no doubt, some circumstances of similarity which might have suggested this tragical history to the minds of the two disciples at this time; yet, in other respects, the circumstances were so different that they ought to have entirely prevented the desire to see the repetition of such a catastrophe. As to Elijah, he was sent to testify against wilful and gross idolatry; his case was urgent, for his liberty and his life were immediately threatened; the dispensation under which he lived was a dispensation of comparative darkness and terror, with the genius of which

such a vindication of the honour of Jehovah was quite congenial ; and, moreover, he acted, we may be sure, by divine impulse. But, when we consider the case of these Samaritans, bad as it was, we find that they laboured under prejudices which, though they did not justify, certainly in some degree extenuated, the guilt of their conduct ; that there was no such immediate danger to our Lord and his disciples as required any such summary and terrible remedy ; that the proposal of the two disciples was, on the very face of it, altogether opposed to the mild genius of the gospel dispensation, and so far from originating in a divine command, was plainly the hasty suggestion of their own minds ; and that if these villagers had been destroyed, they would have been considered as sacrificed to human resentment, and the rest of their countrymen would have been more prejudiced against the Saviour than ever. Besides, it must not be forgotten, that Almighty God, whether with or without the instrumentality of miraculously gifted men, may inflict judgments, in his own just and supreme authority, which none of his creatures should presume to imitate, or to take into their own hands. How superior were the views of the apostles afterwards ! and how much better the use they wished to be made of miraculous gifts, when they prayed, “ Now Lord, behold their threatenings ; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal ; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus ! ” \*

But let us observe what reception the proposal of these two disciples met with from our Lord himself. “ *He turned* ”—he turned short round upon them, beholding them, no doubt, with an eye of authority and displeasure ; and so he may be justly considered as still regarding all who entertain similar thoughts ; “ *and he rebuked them,* ” as he may still be considered as rebuking all his erring people, in the disapproving declarations of his word, for he himself says, “ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” He rebuked them, “ *and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* ” They were ignorant, nay, they were entirely mistaken, as to their spirit, their temper, or disposition. They imagined that they were influenced by a purely religious spirit—by a hatred of sin, and a regard to the honour of Christ : whereas, they were really led to make such a proposal by the original prejudice which, as Jews,

\* Acts iv. 29.

they indulged against the Samaritans, and still more, by their now irritated pride, party feeling, blind zeal, personal resentment, violence, and passion. They were by no means aware how bad their spirit, in this case, was upon the whole, and in particular, how inconsistent it was with the great design of Christ's coming into the world. "*For*," adds he in the last verse at present under consideration, "*the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*" Unquestionably, the express leading design of our Lord's coming was to save men's souls. "The Son of man," says he elsewhere, "is come to seek and to save that which is lost."—"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." And again, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." There is a close connexion, however, between the temporal life and the soul, in this respect, that the destruction of the temporal life of sinners involves the loss of their souls: and indeed the destruction of these Samaritans by fire from heaven, would have been their everlasting destruction, at least in the opinion of the disciples. Besides, it is the tendency of the gospel to save the natural lives of men, by the justice, and mercy, and peace, which it inculcates and cherishes. It embodies in its very nature, in every sense of the words, not only glory to God in the highest, but "on earth peace, and good-will towards men." It disowns every attempt to propagate it by violence or compulsion; and nothing could be more directly contrary to its whole spirit than the proposal now made. In all probability, our Lord had here also a reference to the nature of almost all his miracles. It is a common, just, and important remark, that they were almost all miracles of direct and obvious kindness and mercy, such as, feeding the hungry, casting out devils, healing the sick, and raising the dead.—The proposal, then, being submitted to his consideration, he silenced those who made it, with this sharp rebuke: and without punishing, or resenting, in any way, the affront shown him by these people, he peaceably departed with his disciples, and he and "*they went*" forward "*to another village.*" So, when resistance to the truth is very obstinate and violent in any particular place, it may be proper, instead of further contending, to withdraw, at least for a season, and try whether men may not be found elsewhere more accessible to the light.



What now is the further and more full improvement which we ought to make of this passage?

1. *Let us admire, and in our sphere and measure, imitate, the noble firmness displayed by our Lord and Master on this occasion.* Going back, in imagination, to the time and the place here referred to, we see on the highway which leads from Galilee to Jerusalem—Jerusalem, that compact city whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord, and where are set the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David—we see many solitary pilgrims, and some groups of pilgrims, passing along to that sacred capital, that they may be present at the approaching feast, and offer sacrifices, and join in the various services of the temple. But behold one peculiarly interesting company of at least thirteen men, of whom one, who appears to be their chief, is leading the way, with that mildness of aspect and modesty of gait, which betoken meekness and lowliness of heart, and yet with that undauntedness of countenance and firmness of step, which show him to be resolutely bent on some noble purpose. It is the Son of man, with his apostles, and he has “stedfastly set his face” to go to Jerusalem, notwithstanding all the heavy sufferings, and the dreadful death which he knows are ere long to befall him there. Still more striking, however, than the expression in this passage, is this description, relating, probably, to a period still nearer the fatal hour: \* “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him.” How strikingly, too, was his resolution, nay, his desire, to go forward, expressed in the words, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” How worthy of admiration this courage, especially when viewed in connexion with the noble ends to which it led!

In this, however, there is not only much to be admired, but something to be imitated. As in his conduct in general, so in this part of it in particular, he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps. “Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, let us arm ourselves likewise with the same mind.” Let us, in the strength of God,

\* Mark x. 32.

stedfastly set our face whithersoever duty calls, whether it be to danger or safety, to sufferings or privileges. Let us remember how Paul, that faithful servant of Christ, in his own place and measure, trod in the same steps, and left us a similar example. "And now, behold," said he, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." — "What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." — Believers! whatever trials and sorrows may lie before us, let us, in Jesus' name and strength, and in imitation of his example, stedfastly set our faces to go on: let us go on fearlessly, cheerfully. And, as our Redeemer was now looking forward to his death, so let us look forward to ours. Let us make up our mind to it; let us consider ourselves on the way to it; let us remember that every step we take brings us nearer to it: and let us not seek to avert our face from it, or to turn our back to it and fly from it; but let us stedfastly set our face towards it, and advance nearer and nearer to it, in the faith and hope of the Son of man, who not only died before us, as an example, but died for us as an atonement. Let us contemplate death under the pleasing idea of a being "received up," remembering as to all who die in the Lord, that though their bodies may be laid in the grave, their souls pass immediately into glory. However melancholy this journey, which we are prosecuting, may appear to the eye of sense, it is thus mightily enlivened to the eye of faith; for, indeed, to set our face stedfastly, on Christian principles, towards death, is just to set our face stedfastly towards Jerusalem, even Jerusalem which is above. Let us press forward, then, to this mark, for the prize. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

2. *Let us beware of resembling these Samaritans in not*

*receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.* Though they were not immediately destroyed, yet their sin was great; nay, the very circumstance of the merciful forbearance shown towards them, manifests, with peculiar clearness, the heaviness of the guilt they incurred by rejecting such goodness. This guilt, however, was by no means peculiar to the Samaritans: though it might have been supposed that the Saviour would have been cordially welcomed by all, he was generally rejected, even by the Jews. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And so, down to the present day, there are multitudes who professedly reject him, or who do not "receive" him in the saving sense of the term: and, as it was of old, so it is still, every person that refuses him has some excuse to allege, and some are prevented from receiving him by one prejudice, and some by another; but all their excuses and all their prejudices are as groundless and sinful as were those of the Samaritans. Now, we say to you, Beware of this. It is true that he has not sent messengers before him that you may make ready to receive him personally into your city and your dwellings: had he done this, I believe that, bad as we are, we should not all, like these Samaritans, have refused him admission, but that a goodly procession would have met him on his entrance, and welcomed his arrival, and that not a few would have contended for the honour and the pleasure of receiving him into their houses. But, though he is not thus seeking admission literally into your city, or into any of your dwellings, he is seeking admission spiritually into all your hearts: and here there need be no jealousy, no contest, no desire to monopolize his favour; for his gracious presence and blessing can fill all your hearts, and the more hearts are filled, the happier will each heart be. Yet, alas! how many hearts are shut against him! His messengers, one here, and another there, are this day calling on the inhabitants to prepare thus to receive him; and it is for you, in particular, to see to it that the call be not made to you in vain. It is by faith, remember, that he is to be received: "To as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name."\* Nay, not only are his messengers giving warning of his approach, and calling on you to receive him, but he is himself actually arrived, in the spiritual sense, at your door, and ready to enter. "Behold, I stand at the

door, and knock," says he; "if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him." Who, then, that knows any thing of the honour, pleasure, and advantage, of having him for a guest, is not ready to cry, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?"

3. Let us observe how plainly *every kind and every degree of persecution are here forbidden*. The more violent kinds of persecution to which men have sometimes resorted, and especially persecution unto death, are, in one view, even worse than this proposal of the two disciples: for, as an excellent commentator\* remarks, "It is one thing to appeal to God, and wait his decision, whether he will miraculously interpose, which was all that the apostles required; and another, and a widely different thing indeed, to take the cause out of his hands, and to execute vengeance on opposers by the arm of man, and according to his sentence, without any possibility of certainly knowing whether God does, or does not, approve of what we are doing: one thing to call for fire from heaven, and another to kindle fire on earth, to consume men, branded as heretics." Besides, where is the argument in favour of Christianity from any such human violence? and what can it possibly prove, except that those who employ it are acting a very unchristian part? Fire from heaven might prove a doctrine to be true; but fire kindled under any such pretence, by men, or any other species of persecution, could prove nothing but their own bigotry and cruelty. Indeed, such is the constitution of the human mind, that it is ready to call in question, or to suspect, even the truth itself, when any attempt is made to support it by such means.

It is not to be forgotten how often, and how violently, persecution has been employed to prop up falsehood, and to bear down true religion, and how ready persecutors have been to plead conscience and a regard to the glory of God. "I verily thought with myself," says the apostle of the Gentiles, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which things I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and, when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and, being exceedingly mad against

\* Scott.

them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." He is described as, at one time, "breathing" out "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." Paul lived, however, to be deeply convinced of the guilt of his conduct, and to say, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." It is well known that persecution, by the sword, was the chief means employed to establish Mohammedanism. Not to insist on the persecution of the Christians by the heathen governments—it is well known that persecution is made, in Scripture, one of the distinguishing features of the great apostasy which was to arise in the temple of God, or Christian church. It is foretold\* that the image of the beast should "cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed:" and that "no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." We know where, when, by whom, and to what a dreadful extent, this prophecy was fulfilled. As Imperial Rome was unquestionably the seat of the beast, as an idolatrous and professedly heathen power; so Papal Rome is unquestionably the seat of the beast, as an idolatrous and professedly Christian power. As to the allegation, that persecution was also used on the side of the Protestants, the cases of persecution by them were very rare; they were the exception, and not the rule: and a short time, and a little more light, were sufficient to dissipate the mistake under which some of them laboured on this subject in consequence of the connexion they had formerly held with that great apostasy, the very genius, and rule, and habit, of which, were persecution.

Besides the more violent kinds of persecution, the less violent, such as calumny, sarcasm, and opprobrious names, are quite contrary to the spirit required by this passage. There are some who "whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect." With regard to the treatment that truly pious persons have to expect, the rule is, that, in some form, and some measure, "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution:" and great is the guilt of those who persecute them. That, however, is not exactly the point now before us: for here we find men, who were, on the whole, good men, proposing to cut off persons who were unquestionably guilty of heresy

\* Rev. xiii. 15.

and schism, in general, and who had just treated the Redeemer with marked indignity: and yet he rebuked these good men sharply for the proposal. Now, can any thing be more plainly and strongly conclusive against the employment of any kind of persecution, by any party whatever—the employment of any pains and penalties, any abusive treatment—even though the object be to maintain the unity of the Church, to secure purity of doctrine, and to reclaim heretics and schismatics, or prevent their increase? No doubt, the crimes which tend directly to the destruction of society, ought to be restrained by force: but the attempt to promote orthodoxy and positive spirituality, or even external uniformity in religious observances, by compulsion, ought to be altogether out of the question. Every such mode of procedure is directly contrary to Scripture. Our Lord said to Peter, when he had wounded the high priest's servant because he presumed to lay hands on Jesus, "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" His prayer for his murderers was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Surely, when we behold those who have injured us, or those who are opposed to the truth, we should call for grace, and not for fire, to descend upon them from heaven.

It is altogether preposterous, also, to imagine that violence and harsh measures either have any tendency to promote, or do in fact promote, the cause of true religion. Be it so that some are in error and sin: is it possible to convert them in that way? Is not all true religion a reasonable service? and does it not imply the conviction of the understanding, and the consent of the will? Is it not what is true that is naturally adapted to convince the understanding, and what is amiable that is naturally adapted to win the heart? and is it not the exhibition of truth and grace in the gospel, which alone is effectual, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to overcome the natural dislike of the human heart to vital religion, and make men Christians? We must proceed with man according to the mental constitution which God has given him, if we are to make any good impression on him. As well might we "apply sounds to the eyes, in order to be seen, or colours to the ears, in order to be heard," as attempt to convince the understanding, or

influence the will by force: "the absurdity in both cases is exactly the same."\* Men's external actions may be forced, but not their hearts; and all that persecution can do is to make them hypocrites. Let us abstain, then, from all approaches to it. Let us seek to influence men aright, by scriptural arguments, gentleness, and good deeds; looking up, all the while, to Him who has the hearts of men in his hand, and praying Him to draw them with "the bands of a man"—with the bands which alone are suitable to man, even "the cords of love."

4. In all we do, and especially in what we do under the name of religion, *let us carefully consider what manner of spirit we are of*. There are some who seem to think that, provided there be some truth on their own side, and something wrong on the other, little caution is required as to the keenness they display, and the means of attack they employ; and hence, though they evidently become a prey to prejudice and passion, and get so excited as to be incapable of forming a deliberate and impartial judgment of several of the points in dispute, and set no bounds to their violence, they pretend to despise the remark, that they are proceeding in a very bad spirit. But how can any Christian consistently disregard this, or object to the caution, when Jesus Christ himself here virtually calls to us all to consider and know what manner of spirit we are of? It is not enough that our zeal in attacking error have some real error in view: we must also take heed to the manner in which our zeal works, both internally and outwardly. There is a furious zeal which leads a man to cry, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts," which has no regard to moderation in degree, or propriety in manner, and which is quite reckless of consequences. That was a bad spirit which led Moses repeatedly to strike the rock, and to cry out, in a passion, "Ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" A bad spirit is plainly at work when men manifest such symptoms as the following—when, despairing of carrying their point by calm argument, they have recourse to passionate invective and clamour—when they misconstrue the motives, and words, and actions of those whom they are opposing—when they lay hold, with eagerness and satisfaction, on what is doubtful, to twist it to what is plainly to be condemned, exaggerating faults, and omitting, or undervaluing excellencies—when they slyly, but falsely, insinuate that they know

\* Dr S. Clarke,

more than they choose to express—when they sacrifice the common maxims of friendship and the common courtesies of life at the shrine of violence—and when they bring themselves into a situation in which they are tempted to rejoice in iniquity, and not in the truth. It is quite in vain for men, when they are going on in this way, to plead that they are engaged in a good cause: the fact is, that, in the great majority of cases, truth is found on the opposite side from such procedure; and even when men have the right side of the question, it is disgraced by such violence. It often happens that those who are proceeding in this way, when they think they are acting a very faithful and very noble part, and doing much good, are acting very foolishly, and doing much mischief. If they seem to succeed, by such means, for a time, the tide soon turns, and what seems to be gained, is lost. Let us not have “bitter envying and strife in our hearts.” “Let us not render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing.” Michael, the archangel, when disputing even with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation; and that should be a lesson to us, even in the most provoking cases, and in dealing with the most inveterate enemies of religion. “The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men,” “patient;” “in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” Alas! many good people are often under the influence of a bad spirit, and know it not. Let us all watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.

Lastly. *Let us be very thankful when we think of the gracious purpose for which the Son of God is here said to have come into the world.* His gospel has already saved the temporal life of many; and if wars, and fightings, and persecutions, have arisen, they have arisen, not from the gospel, but in defiance of it. The time is coming, too, when his gracious purpose, in this respect, shall be completely accomplished. When Christ’s reign is universal, the reign of violence will be everywhere unknown. Men shall then beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and not learn the art of war any more. “They shall not hurt nor destroy, in all God’s holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” But especially ought we to be thankful that the Son of God came, not to destroy,



but to save, in the spiritual sense. He came, not as a messenger of vengeance, as our guilty fears might have apprehended, but as the Prince of peace, and the God of salvation. Yes; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Let us fall in with his gracious design, by receiving the gospel for ourselves: and may he hasten the time when his salvation shall reach to the most distant lands, and when men shall be blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed. Amen.

## LECTURE LI.

LUKE IX. 57-62.

“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. 62. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

WE have here an account of the way in which three different persons acted in reference to the one duty of following Christ; and we shall examine their cases in the order in which the evangelist introduces them, and endeavour to carry along with us the practical instruction which each of them respectively suggests. It is not certain that they all occurred on one occasion, and it is clear that they are not introduced, or at least the two first of them are not introduced, by Luke in the order of time. He had been just giving an account of Jesus' going up to Jerusalem; and now he says, in the first verse of the passage under consideration, “*And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way;*” but he does not expressly say that it was in the way to Jerusalem: and, when we compare the parallel passage in Matthew, 8th chapter from the 18th verse, we find it written, as introductory to the account of two cases which are so similar to the two first here before us, that they cannot be reasonably supposed to have occurred twice: “Now, when Jesus saw great multitudes, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side;” that is, to cross over the lake of Gennesaret to the country of the Gergesenes; and the cases in question are represented as having happened before he entered into the ship, and, of course, happened when he was on the way to the sea shore, accompanied by his regular disciples, and others who were occasional hearers. Though

multitudes were waiting to hear him where he was, yet others, in other places, needed instruction as well as they; besides, his removal to some distance would serve to try the sincerity of those who appeared to be so earnest to hear him, for if they did really value his ministry as they ought, they would not grudge the trouble of following it when it was withdrawn from their immediate neighbourhood. Observe here, that while there are some who are negligent of the ordinances of God's house, though they live almost at its very gate, and have every facility of attendance, there are many who are so remiss that a very moderate distance, or a very slight difficulty, is reckoned an insurmountable obstacle, and a sufficient excuse for general, or, at least, frequent absence: and hence learn that, however you may be situated, nothing but necessity should prevent you from waiting regularly on the public worship of God, and the preaching of his word.

Jesus Christ, being about to leave that part of the country and cross the sea of Galilee, "*A certain man*" (according to Luke) "*said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*" Matthew tells us that this man was a "scribe,"—that is, literally, a writer; and as writing, and especially writing with expertness, was, at one time, but a rare qualification among the people, the name signified a man of learning in general, and a scribe was a doctor, or teacher and interpreter of the law. For the most part we find the scribes, along with the Pharisees, openly opposed to Christ; but here we find a scribe promising well, addressing Jesus as Lord, or Master, and declaring that he would continue to wait on him. He had been an occasional hearer, and now had obtained a certain conviction, though probably a vague conviction, of the dignity of Jesus, and the excellencies of his discourses, and was under such a temporary impression, as prompted him to make this declaration; and you observe that it was of his own accord, determined, and unlimited. The resolution was good as to its letter, but very deficient as to its spirit. In all probability, he imagined that Jesus was to assume a temporal kingdom, and expected that he would gladly accept of such an offer from a learned and influential scribe, and would exalt him to a high and profitable station: and it is plain that the resolution was adopted and expressed without due consideration—indeed, with excessive rashness, and self-confidence.

Our Lord, who knew what was in man, saw well the state of this scribe's mind, and how he needed to be dealt with, in order to bring him to sober consideration. Instead of praising his zeal, and urging him forward, he suggests to him matter of deep and serious reflection; instead of a flattering view of the advantages, he gives him a faithful representation of the difficulties, which lay before him; instead of keeping his eye fixed on the bright side of the cloud, he bids him look also at the dark. "*He said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*" "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests:" even the wildest animals have their places of resort. There are holes for foxes and other burrowing animals, and there are nests for the fowls of heaven; and the God of nature and providence gives food to them all. "The conies," saith Solomon, "are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks."—"The trees of the Lord are full of sap," says the Psalmist, "the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies."—"These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season."—"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young." But, as for Jesus Christ, "he had not where to lay his head:" he had no fixed place of abode, no house he could call his own, no certain spot on which, when worn out with the toils of the day, he could lay himself down to rest at night. You readily perceive how suitably this statement was placed before the mind of the scribe. It was directly calculated to dissipate his dream of earthly ease, prosperity, and grandeur; for, when such was the condition of Christ himself, the worldly exaltation of his followers was quite out of the question. And this statement was directly calculated to try the stability of the scribe's resolution, and to convince him that Christ's genuine disciples were then to be proved and known, not by bold asseverations and hasty promises, made during the sudden flush of feeling, but by continuing to follow him steadfastly, notwithstanding all the trials to which they might be exposed on this account. We are not told what was the result of this case, but it is the general opinion, and it is probable, that this saying proved enough to detect the self-confidence, and to cool the

false zeal, of the scribe, and to cause him to withdraw and to speak no more of following Jesus.

Now, what is the instruction we should derive from this first case? We learn from it, in common with the two following cases, that it is our bounden duty to follow Christ, and to follow him whithersoever he goeth. We have this description of the redeemed in the Revelation:\* "These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Literally, to follow Jesus, as those who attended him while he was on the earth, is what we cannot do; but to follow him in the spiritual sense, as believing in his name, imitating his example, and obeying his commandments, is what we may do, and must do, if we are to be saved, and was what alone availed to the salvation of his immediate disciples. The resolution of this scribe was, as we have said, excellent in itself.

But, while we are reminded, in all the cases, of the necessity of thus following Christ, we are here instructively reminded that there are some who, like this scribe, are forward to make keen and unreserved, and, perhaps, for the time, sincere professions of their resolution to follow Jesus, and yet do not ultimately prove steady. They are ready to say, with the Israelites, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," without ever suspecting their own weakness, and without being properly aware of the difficulties of a truly Christian faith and practice. Like the thorny-ground hearers, they hear the word, and anon with joy receive it; but having no root of grace in them, they are soon offended. Now, we should be aware of this, lest we ourselves fail, after the same fickle example. Jesus Christ does not wish to deceive us—he does not wish to entrap us, so to speak, into a religious profession, by lax views of doctrine, or practice, or by prospects of worldly aggrandizement; but he propounds doctrines that strike at the root of all spiritual pride and all worldliness, and he requires, at all hazards, an entire and perpetual surrender of the whole man to his service. When we are to take up the profession of Christianity, he would have us, according to his own very significant expression, "to count the cost." The meaning is, not that there is any thing so painful and formidable in a life of faith in the Son of God as should deter us from entering on it—on the contrary, to those who set themselves to the duty in a right way, his "yoke is easy and his burden is light;" but still,

\* Rev. xiv. 4.

there is a burden, there is a yoke to be borne, there is a real labour, a struggle to be undergone; and if we profess ourselves resolved to be Christians, without being aware of this, we shall be totally unprepared for the contest, and shall fail in the time of trial. We should think well, then, of what a real Christian life is; and we should enter on it, though not with a spirit of bondage, yet with due consideration, with a proper sense of our own weakness, and with a firm dependence on divine grace to keep us steady.

And even though we have already begun to follow Christ in earnest, the spirit of this case and of other passages of Scripture, is not favourable to our making positive, spontaneous, and uncalled-for asseverations of what we shall be or do. As the scribe fell short, it is to be feared, of his profession, so have many others. So, for example, did Peter, who said to Jesus, "I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death"—"Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake:" but we know what was the result, and how he denied Christ with oaths. If we shall at any time be clearly called on by Providence—if the glory of God and the good of men shall require it—if, like Paul, we shall be "compelled to glory"—let us speak out boldly, let us witness a good confession in words, and let us, in humble confidence in God's strength, tell to their face those who would terrify or entice us away from Christ, that we are resolved to hold fast his name, and to let no man take our crown; but in general, let us be contented with showing our faith by our works, and with seeking to convince men of our stability by actually persevering.

And, how affecting and instructive is the description which the Redeemer here gives of his lowly, poor, and persecuted state! So poor was he that some of his followers "ministered unto him of their substance" while he lived; and when he died, he was buried at the expense of a pious and charitable stranger. He was, throughout, destitute, not only of the conveniences and comforts, but of what are considered the necessities of life. He was born in a stable, and laid in a manger—despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—without a home of his own, and driven by relentless persecutors from place to place, and thus prevented from enjoying the pillow of rest which his few attached disciples might have furnished: while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, he had not where to lay his head. And who is this?

and why is it thus with him? This is the Son of Mary—the Messiah—the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God—the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, who was infinitely exalted and happy before the world was; but who, though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, thus humbled himself, and took on him the form of a servant. Never was such a contrast heard of; nor could it have been conceived of, had it not been exhibited. And why was it thus with him? Why but for us, my friends, for us poor, sinful, and perishing creatures, and for our salvation? "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich." How ought we to admire and adore him for this condescending love! Should not this also operate powerfully in inducing us all to open our hearts to receive him as our Saviour? When we think of him as not having where to lay his head, may he not be considered as saying to each of us, "Open unto me, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night?"

There is here a striking demonstration, too, of the vanity of the world. Doubtless, men should be thankful for whatever worldly prosperity God sends; but, if wealth and a fine house be the all of life, or the most desirable of portions, why was it that the Son of man had not where to lay his head? This touching description should also support the minds of all Christ's followers, and prevent them both from distrusting Providence, and from murmuring under poverty, or any trouble, if it shall come upon them. Looking at what is said of these wild animals—if the Lord care for the foxes and the birds, will he not care for his own people, and find them (however mean) a dwelling-place and food? Are they not of more value than many sparrows? "Behold the fowls of the air," said Jesus, "for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" And, looking at what is here said of Jesus—if even very griping poverty should be their lot, should they not be comforted under it? should they not be reconciled to it? nay, should it not be sanctified, and sweetened, and blessed to them, by the remembrance of their beloved Master's destitution? "Even unto this present hour," said Paul, and he said it with composure and joy, "we both hunger, and

thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." "The disciple is not above his master," said Jesus, "nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord."

We shall only further remark, on this case, that though it is to be feared the scribe withdrew, there is nothing in this declaration of our Lord's which ought to discourage us from following him, but there is much which should have the opposite effect. There is, indeed, nothing to attract, but much to repel the earthly mind, in our Lord's humiliation; but it may be questioned whether to the eye of the renewed and believing soul he ever appears so lovely, glorious, and winning, as when viewed in that light. Shall we not love him who so loved us? Surely we ought. Shall we forsake him because of what he submitted to on our account? Such folly and base ingratitude be far from us! Let the thought of what he has done and suffered for us, sweetly constrain us to do and suffer everything for him; and surely, if we feel at all aright, we shall feel that *that* everything, as we call it, is nothing in comparison of the debt of gratitude we owe him. Nor is it possible, however great the deprivations to which any may be subjected by following him, that they shall be losers at last. Should they be thrust out from every resting-place, and from the earth itself, by slow persecution, or a violent death, they shall have a mansion in heaven. Let us, then, believingly and practically follow the Saviour whithersoever he goeth, and whithersoever he would lead us.

Verse 59: "*And he said unto another, Follow me.*" Our Lord enjoined this man, who had hitherto been only an occasional attendant on him, now to accompany him stately, in order that he might be fully instructed in the gospel, and trained up for its ministry. You will observe that this case differs from the preceding in that this man did not, like the first, spontaneously declare that he would follow Christ, but waited till he was called to follow him. The other man was too hasty; this man was too slow to obey where the call was clear. He ought to have obeyed the call implicitly and immediately: but what was his reply? "*He said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*" He does not absolutely refuse compliance; nay, he says as much as if he were resolved to comply at last: but he requests to be allowed to remain at home till he had buried his father. Some think that his father was not actually



dead, but only in advanced age and in much infirmity, and that the son wished to be allowed to stay with him, as long as he lived, for a comfort to him, and promised that after his father's death and burial, he would then accompany Christ. If this was the state of things, the proposal for delay was a proposal to defer till an indefinite, and, perhaps, long period; which, of course, though it had some appearance of good, was very improper. But most probably his father was actually dead; yet even in this view, though it might at first seem that the proposal was reasonable, and was indeed very natural, it was not right, as will soon appear.

Our Lord would not listen to the plea of delay, but repeated his call in these words, "*Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*" "Let the dead bury their dead." This striking proverbial expression could never have been uttered by our Lord with the view of discouraging natural affection, or any becoming attention to parents, or other relations, either alive or dead. He himself exhibited a beautiful pattern of filial affection, and reproved the scribes and Pharisees for leading men to transgress the fifth commandment by their traditions: and his inspired apostle exhorts children "to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God." All harsh interpretations, and indiscriminating applications of these words are, therefore, to be carefully avoided. Still they bear a strong and important meaning. If by the dead, in the first part of the sentence, we understand the literally dead, then the meaning is, that though there were none but dead persons left behind (a most unlikely case), it were better to leave the dead unburied, than to refuse to follow Christ. But the word, in its first use, is rather to be understood of the figuratively, or spiritually, dead, for so those who are in their natural and unrenewed state are frequently called in Scripture: thus we read, "He was dead and is alive again;" "Dead in trespasses and sins;" and, "She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." The import, in this view, is, that this man was told to leave the burying of his father to those who were in a careless and unconverted state, rather than disobey the call to follow Christ and to preach the gospel.

Now, while there may have been very peculiar circumstances, altogether unknown to us, in this case, which rendered the authoritative and seemingly severe command of

Christ most proper and gracious, there are some things obvious, and others very probable, which lead to the same conclusion. The reason of the call, for example, was very urgent. This will not be disputed when the importance, not merely of this man's soul, but of the general cause of the gospel of peace, is considered; there was, indeed, an urgency which justified and required a departure from ordinary rules. This man was called to prepare for soon preaching the gospel, and this was not only very important in itself, but required him to be free from ceremonial uncleanness. Our Lord may have had some reference, in thus prohibiting him from attending the funeral, to the idea of ceremonial pollution by the dead, and certain legal appointments regarding priests and Nazarites. "He that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother."\*—"All the days that he (the Nazarite) separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die; because the consecration of his God is upon his head." In all cases, such coming at the dead contracted ceremonial defilement, and rendered it necessary to submit to a course of legal purification for a considerable time; and therefore, if this man had been allowed to remain for any such purpose, he would have been longer detained than might at first sight appear, and than was consistent with the urgency of the case, for he could not have gone along with Christ that day. Our Lord might also have been aware that if he had permitted him to stay behind, there would have been a danger of his being detained altogether; and thus may have arisen another wise and gracious reason for this peremptory injunction. But, though we could not see, or conjecture, so much as all this, we must acknowledge that the express command of the Lord superseded the obligation of all ordinary rules; and that it would have been better, if nothing else could be, that a man should remain unburied, than that the Lord should be disobeyed in any degree, or for the shortest period.

With regard to the result of this case, as every other express and personal call of which we read was obeyed, so

\* Lev. xxi. 10; Numb. vi. 6.

we must conclude that Christ's calling of this man was accompanied with the inward energy of his grace to render it effectual.

What now is the instruction we should derive from this second case? We can suppose a case in which it would plainly be duty to be guided by this passage in the literal sense, and to go away, or to remain away, even from the funeral of one's father. This would be justified, for example, by a case of very urgent necessity, or mercy, with regard to the living. Or, we shall have a case still more similar to the one before us, if we suppose a missionary who has had a clear call to the work, and who is ready to set out in a ship, which is destined for the country where he is to labour, and which is just about to set sail: the trial may be severe, but it is clear that neither the dangerous illness, nor the death, of any of his dearest relations, should keep him back, so as to make him lose his passage, and to frustrate the noble work to which he is called. But, passing from any further consideration of this case, in so close and literal a view, and looking at it in a more enlarged sense, the general principle it embodies is this, that, taking care not to overstrain the point to the neglect of the relative duties which we really owe, nothing connected with our friends should prevent any of us from following Christ in the spiritual and saving sense. It cannot be questioned that men's salvation is often hindered by their pretended regard to their friends, when that is a mere fictitious apology for the disinclination of their own hearts. But granting that their regard for their parents and friends is sincere and deep, it ought not to be forgotten that the preference is still due to their Creator and Redeemer. Now, apply this to the subject before us. Though the direct tendency of the gospel is to make men of one mind, and peaceful, and happy, yet it often indirectly becomes the innocent occasion of differences between friends, when some of them are converted, and others remain careless and ungodly, and when the blame lies with the latter. Then it requires, at once, much meekness, as well as much courage, to act a right part; but those who would be Christ's disciples must not fail to cleave to him at all events. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth," says he; "I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."\* And again, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple:"—"hate not," that is, comparatively with Christ—love them not less than he loves Him, and positively refuse to be influenced by them, when they come into competition with Him, and would keep him from following Jesus. The spirit which animated Levi to come out from his relations, so far as was necessary for the service of God, and which is so much commended, is worthy of universal adoption, "He said unto his father and mother, I have not seen them; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children."† The call, too, which God addresses, by the Psalmist, to the Church, must be obeyed by all who would be saved, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him."‡ I hope in God there are very few of you who are yourselves much tried, or who are trying others, in the painful way to which we are referring: it is probable enough, however, that there are some of you who are connected with those who seek to keep you from forsaking the world and following Christ; and also some of you whose example, and even more direct endeavours, are calculated to detain some of your connexions in the same state of spiritual deadness with yourselves. If there be, we would say to the latter, "Woe unto you!"—"for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Cease thus to fight against God; and, instead of opposing, begin to encourage and to imitate those of your family and friends who are "asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward." And we would say to the former, Give no unnecessary offence to your unbelieving friends, nay, do every thing you can, consistently with duty, to disarm their prejudice, and to reconcile them to your views; but beware of being yourselves ruined, or injured, by a regard, an undue regard, to the wishes of unconverted

\* Matt. x. 34; Luke xiv. 26. † Deut. xxxiii. 9. ‡ Ps. xlv. 10.

relations. Leave these worldly persons to follow their worldly pursuits, if more you cannot make of it at present; "let the dead bury their dead," but follow you Christ. Nor will this be to desert your duty to them, or to act unkindly to them, but quite the reverse; instead of an interference between a proper regard to yourselves and love and duty to them, there is the most perfect harmony; for, faithfulness on your part is the only way in which you can ever hope to be useful to them.

In closing our remarks on this case, we observe, with that excellent practical commentator, Henry, from the circumstance of this second case turning out so well, while the first entirely failed, that "we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us, not of our promises to him." "Ye have not chosen me," saith Jesus, "but I have chosen you."—"It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."—"He calleth whom he will." May he draw us, and we shall run after him!

Let us now consider the third case, as it is given in the last two verses of the chapter. Matthew relates the two first cases, but it is only in Luke that we find this last. It, perhaps, occurred at a different time from the two preceding; but its close resemblance to them rendered its introduction here very natural. "*And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.*" Though it is not expressly stated, I think it may be gathered from the strain of this passage, that in this case, as in the case immediately preceding, what was said was in reply to an express call of our Lord, and not, as in the first case, a spontaneous declaration. And there seems reason to believe that, though this man wished to shift the call for a time, he found himself constrained forthwith to comply. He did not give a positive refusal; nay, he declared that he would follow Christ, and only requested permission, as it is here expressed, to "go bid them farewell who were at home in his house." No doubt, the common idea of bidding farewell is included in the passage as it is in the original, but there is more included in it, for it implies setting the things in order at his house, that having done so, and given proper directions about every thing, he might then leave both the things and the people of his house.\*

\* See the use of the Greek word ἀποχαιρεῖσθαι in Mark vi. 46; Luke xiv. 33; Acts xviii. 18, 21, and 2 Cor. ii. 13.

Though this request discovered a deficiency of zeal, devotedness, and readiness of obedience, Jesus might, perhaps, have granted it, if it could have been granted with safety to the man himself, and justice to the cause of God. Thus, a similar request, in very similar circumstances, was granted to Elisha (as we read in 1 Kings xix. 19), to which there may have been an allusion on the part both of this man and of our Lord. "So he (Elijah) departed thence, and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again; for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat; then he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him." In Elisha, however, as his very prompt and decisive conduct immediately proved, there was that determination of mind which rendered it safe for him to go and take leave of his friends; whereas, in this man, our Lord, we may believe, perceived a wavering and a desire to gain time, which would have rendered it very dangerous for him to be exposed to the temptations which a sight of his property and a meeting with his friends would have presented. The sight of his goods and his comfortable home might have tempted him to desert from Christ altogether, like Demas, of whom Paul said, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Or, if he was not a covetous man, natural affection might have overcome him, when his family and friends began to beseech him not to leave them. Such hesitation and delay, moreover, where the duty to which he was now called was so important, and the command so positive, were not to be encouraged, but checked. Our Lord, accordingly, refused his request, in these words:

*"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* This comparison, drawn from an important operation in husbandry, is very intelligible and expressive, when taken in the literal sense. How useless would be the ploughman's engaging in his work, if he desisted when he had made a single furrow! And what bad work would he make, if, while he continued

to hold the plough, instead of looking right before him, he turned his eye backward! He could neither preserve the straightness nor the proper depth of the furrow; he would mar the field; and he would be justly reckoned so unfit for his work, that no husbandman would employ him. Hesiod, one of the oldest uninspired writers, gives this description of a good ploughman, that he is one who, "attending to his business, draws the furrows straight, by no means looking round about on his companions, but keeping his mind fixed on his work."\* The figurative application of this comparison is also obvious. The individual in question would have been quite unfit for the difficult work of preaching the gospel, and, indeed, for the personal enjoyment of the blessings, and discharge of the duties of the gospel, if he had either actually gone away from Christ at this time, or even continued inwardly to cherish the desire of departing implied in the expression, "looking back." And so it holds true universally, that whoever either openly apostatizes from Christ by returning to the world, or secretly hankers after the world in his heart, is unfit for the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven—neither is a true Christian here, nor will be acknowledged as such hereafter.

And now, like the two preceding cases, this case also is full of instruction. There is a peculiar reference here, as in the whole of this passage, to ministers—to those who are called to preach the word. If they are to be useful, faithful, and accepted of their Master, they must, at the outset, take leave of the world, in the sense of its being their chosen portion, and necessary to their happiness; and they must hold themselves in readiness to go whithersoever the Head of the Church may call them. The apostle Paul, in teaching Timothy to hold himself disencumbered, has these words: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." They should also study to preserve a similar spirit throughout. And, as they should not get so involved in worldly business of their own, so neither should any desire to see them so much engaged in the merely secular, however charitable, affairs of others, as may, in any hurtful degree, withdraw them from their proper spiritual employment. When a murmuring arose that the Grecian

\* *Ὁς κ' ἔργου μελιτῶν ἰδίην αὐτὰν ἱλαῖνοι,*

*Μηκίτι παπταίνων μὲθ' ὁμήλικας, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ἔργῳ*

*Θυμὸν ἔχων.*

*Operum et Dierum, ii. 61.*

widows were neglected in the daily ministration of charity, the twelve said,\* in words very instructive in all ages of the Church, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

This case, however, is applicable to all, and it should be felt by all of you as pressing on you the necessity of an immediate and unhesitating compliance with Christ's command to follow him as your Saviour and Master. There are, probably, none of you who are prepared to give a direct and positive refusal for ever; but there are certainly many of you who are postponing compliance, on various pretences. Say not that you have not time to attend to your salvation at present, and that you must first get your temporal affairs in order, "but seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and all needful things will be added unto you. If you have never yet begun to follow Christ, begin now. If you think that you are willing and resolved to follow him, see that you actually do so. If you think you are beginning to follow him, break thoroughly away from sin and the world, and see that in a short time your progress be so considerable that it may be manifest you are on the way to heaven. Beware of whatsoever, and of whomsoever, might be the means of arresting you at the outset. Parley not with the tempter, and keep far away from all that would enchain you to the earth. Of all excuses for not immediately and heartily yielding, of all arguments for at least a little delay, none is more plausible, or more dangerous, than that of consulting friends. There are, indeed, many things in which it is wise to ask and to follow the opinion of others; but, as to whether you ought to believe and obey the gospel, whether you ought to seek the one thing needful, and to choose the good part which shall never be taken from you—as to whether you ought (as it is here expressed) to follow Christ, there ought to be no question about this: the propriety and necessity of this are beyond dispute—there is not the least occasion to ask advice of any one as to this: and if you can now, where you sit, coolly think of declining to close with the gospel call till you go home and consult your friends, you are either yet very far from the kingdom of

\* Acts vi. 1-4.



God, or you are labouring under a most dangerous mistake, which the case before you should rectify. Suppose, however, you have this moment resolved to put off Christ till you advise with your friends, and get their consent: they are either followers of Christ themselves, or they are not. But, in either case, it is quite needless to wait for, or ask, their opinion; for I can save you the trouble and the time of asking, by telling you at once, and without a doubt, what the substance of their opinion will be. If they are not following Christ themselves, they will, in some way, either plainly or by implication, dissuade *you* from following him; and so, if you are to consult them, and be influenced by them, you may just as well flatly and bluntly refuse Christ at once, and say to him, each of you, "No, I will not follow thee." But if, on the contrary, your friends are enlightened, believing, and godly persons themselves, if they are indeed following Jesus Christ whithersoever he goeth; then you yourselves know quite well what advice they would give you, and you need not wait to ask, nor need I say a word about it. They have given it you already habitually in their example, and perhaps with entreaties, and prayers, and tears. I say, then, if you wish to do what of all conceivable things would most rejoice their hearts, just comply with this invitation immediately, and let them forthwith and ever after this see that you are following Christ. In a word, why should the persons, or things, of your house at home, or of the world at large, cause you another moment's delay? What was spoken in reference to different though similar subjects, may be applied here, in this the day of your lingering and dangerous yet hopeful crisis: "In that day, he who shall be upon the house top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife." Remember how, when looking back with lingering regret to Sodom, she was turned into a pillar of salt, an everlasting monument of God's displeasure. "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

Finally. Let those of you who are following Christ, that is, living in the faith and obedience of the gospel, be admonished, by this case, of the necessity of being steady and faithful to the last. One furrow is nothing, so you must persevere in this spiritual work. No part of your Christian business can be properly discharged, if your attention be

directed elsewhere. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways:" keep, therefore, your eye ever on your work, and pursue it with a simplicity of aim. Let not your friends hinder you. "Confer not with flesh and blood," as if there were any doubt whether you ought to lead a consistent life. Be like Paul, who said, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." Beware of secret declensions. Beware even of looking back. Look right before you. Press forward in the strength of God. Follow on to the end; and "verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed Christ in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now, the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, God's soul shall have no pleasure in him. Be ye not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

## LECTURE LII.

LUKE X. 1-20.

"After these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come. 2. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. 3. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. 4. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes; and salute no man by the way. 5. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. 7. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. 8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: 9. And heal the sick that are therein; and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11. Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 12. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. 13. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. 15. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. 16. He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me. 17. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

LUKE is the only evangelist who gives us an account of this very important branch of the Gospel history, the appointment, mission, and success of the seventy. "*After these things,*" says he, "*the Lord,*" (for so he styles Jesus in a way expressive of his divinity,) "*the Lord appointed other seventy also;*" that is, in addition to the twelve. In fixing

the exact number of the apostles, Christ seems to have had regard to the number of the tribes of Israel; and so in fixing the exact number of this additional set of labourers, he seems to have had regard to the number of the elders of Israel. The number seventy is, indeed, a remarkable number in Scripture.\* The number of Jacob's family who came down into Egypt was seventy. At Elim there were "twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees." Seventy of the elders of Israel were taken up into the mount with Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, to see the glory of God. Seventy elders were afterwards chosen to assist Moses in governing; and the Spirit which was upon him was given to them, and they prophesied. The Jewish sanhedrim, or chief council, afterwards consisted of seventy. And now, our Lord ordains and commissions seventy persons, besides the apostles, to go and preach the gospel, and to prepare the way for him in those cities which he was to visit. From this it appears that, by this time, the cause of Christ was growing, and that the number of his followers was considerable. The names of the seventy are not given, but it is probable that many who are afterwards mentioned as the friends and companions of the apostles were of the number.

You will observe that the instructions given to the seventy are, in most particulars, the same with those given to the twelve, in the beginning of the preceding chapter and the parallel passages of the other evangelists. The instructions are the same with regard to their proceeding two and two—their making no extraordinary provision for the journey, which was to be short—their just title to be supported in the work—the indifference they should show to all self-indulgence—the prudent way they should conduct themselves when they entered into any city and house—the subject of their preaching, namely, the kingdom of God—the miracles of healing they were to work in proof of their divine mission—and finally, how they were to wipe off the dust of their feet as a testimony against those who would

\* Exod. i. 5, xv. 27, xxiv. 1; Numb. xi. 16. The number now sent out by Christ was, unquestionably, exactly seventy. The number seventy-two, in the Vulgate, is an unjustifiable departure from the Greek, and a manifest corruption. Some writers speak of the sanhedrim, or chief council of the Jews, having consisted of seventy-two, or six from each tribe; but there is no sufficient foundation for that opinion. If, indeed, Moses be counted as presiding over the seventy elders, and if the president of the sanhedrim in later times be counted, the number would be seventy-one.

not receive them. The former account was also introduced by a similar statement of the fewness of labourers, and of an injunction to the disciples to pray that the Lord of the spiritual harvest would thrust forth more. Having so lately considered these particulars, we shall now pass them over entirely, or almost, without remark, and shall only consider the circumstances which did not come before us then.

"Behold," said Jesus, verse 3, "*I send you forth as lambs among wolves.*" Even in this first journey, still more in their subsequent labours, they were to be exposed to the subtlety and cruelty of men, whom he compared to wolves, and whom they could not resist by force : and therefore, if he stated as fully to them the way in which they should carry themselves as he did to the twelve,\* he told them to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," and added other considerations of a comforting and encouraging nature. The trying situation of the seventy, here so briefly, yet so emphatically described, has often been that of other preachers, and of private followers of the Lord ; and they are here reminded that though, in some situations, they may do well to avail themselves of other means of defence, particularly the protection of the law, yet in most cases, their best means of safety, under God, are their own prudence and gentleness. Are any of you who desire to be faithful to Christ, in any way beset and harassed on that account ? cautiously avoid whatever would needlessly irritate your troublers, and furnish them with a handle against you ; and, at the same time, bear their unkind treatment with all meekness, and cease not to conduct yourselves in a friendly and conciliating manner towards them. In this way, you will probably disarm their hostility at last, and you will, at all events, retain your own peace of mind, and the approbation of your blessed Master.

"*Salute no man by the way,*" said our Lord to the seventy. Neither this, nor any other part of Scripture, can be justly considered as discountenancing the ordinary tokens of civility between man and man. There may be some Pharisees who vainly "love salutations in the market-places," but that is no reason why Christians should not be courteous, or why they should affect needless singularity of manners. Our Lord here intended, by the prohibition, not to do away salutations in general, but to impress on the minds of the seventy the expedition with which they should

\* Matt. x. 16.

proceed to accomplish their important mission. Thus, when Elisha sent away his servant, Gehazi, to Shunem, in haste, he said to him,\* "Go thy way; if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again." It is to be remembered that salutations, in the East, were not made by a slight gesture, or a word; but were very formal, and required considerable time.†

Our Lord further directed the seventy that "*into whatsoever house they entered, they should first say, Peace be to this house.*" This was the usual form of salutation on entering a house. "Get ye up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name," said David to his ten young men, "and thus shall ye say to him, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast." Peace, in such salutations, seems to have been put for every blessing; and in using the expression, the seventy must have referred, not only to all providential good, but to the blessings of the gospel of peace, which they were sent out to publish and propose. "*And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it.*" According to a Hebrew form of expression, persons are called the sons, or children, of that by which they are characterized, or to which they are exposed, whether good or evil. Thus, we are to understand by "children of disobedience," disobedient persons; by the "children of this world," worldly persons; by the "children of light," enlightened persons; by "sons of Belial," wicked persons; by "children of wrath," persons exposed to wrath; by "sons of death," persons appointed to die; by "the children of the promise," the persons to whom the promise was made, and on whom its blessings were to come. So, by "the son of peace," we are to understand any man who was in possession, or who was desirous, of the blessings included in the word *peace*, or, any one on whom He from whom all blessings flow intended to confer peace. If there be any such person in the house, "your peace shall rest upon it;" your prayer for a blessing shall be answered favourably for the object of it: and "*if not*"—if there be no such person there, yet your prayer, though lost to the house, shall not be lost to yourselves—"it shall turn to you again," you yourselves shall be the better

\* 2 Kings iv. 29.

† "Salutationes istæ non fiebant levi gestu verbove, sed multis per-cunctationibus, bonisque ominibus trahebantur, non sine multis corporis flexionibus, osculis, amplexibus."—*Grotius, in locum.*

for these pious and benevolent wishes. Thus, the Psalmist testifies \* that "his prayer" for his enemies "returned into his own bosom." And, as in Isa. xlix., "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely, my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."—"Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." Let us all habitually cherish a sincere and ardent desire for the temporal and spiritual welfare of those with whom we may have any intercourse; hoping, as we may justly hope, that in some cases that desire will be fully gratified, and believing what our own experience will completely confirm, that when it shall not succeed as to its direct object, it will reflect back the happiest influence on our own edification and comfort.

Our Lord directed the seventy to remain wherever they were received, "*eating and drinking such things as they gave,*" and "*as were set before them:*"† "cheerfully and contentedly eating and drinking what they found; for, it was beneath them to be very solicitous and nice, and to occasion any unnecessary trouble in the family."‡ In this, too, our Lord, probably, referred to those complicated rules of the Pharisees respecting meats and drinks, which were founded on their own traditions, and not enjoined in the law of Moses. They were extremely punctilious in these matters; and it was difficult to set a meal, or a dish, before them, with which they would not find some fault, or with regard to which they would not raise some scruple about partaking of it. Christ directed them to disregard all such trifles. If not yet actually arrived, the time was at hand when the rule was to be followed, which was afterwards expressly laid down by the apostle Paul: "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you eat, asking no questions for conscience' sake."

Jesus stated, as the reason why the seventy should readily receive such assistance, that "*the labourer is worthy of his hire.*" With the same view, he said (Matt. x. 10) in reference to the twelve, "The workman is worthy of his meat." The minister of the gospel is a labourer, or workman; and

\* Ps. xxxv. 13.

† Τα παρατιθίμνα—Ἦν δὲ τα μὲν παρατιθίμνα ἂν ἴσα αὐτῇ τι τοῖς παλουμένοις ἵπαι το δειπνον, "The same things were always set before Cyrus, as before those who were invited to the entertainment."—*Cyropæd.* lib. ii.

‡ Doddridge.

he is to exert himself diligently in his calling. It was never intended that he should live in splendour, or receive any income, and do nothing, or almost nothing, for it. It is reasonable and just, however, that he should be maintained for his work done. Suitable maintenance is his due: how that is to be furnished must depend on various circumstances, but the principle itself is clear and scriptural. In the words of the apostle to the Corinthians: "Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

As to the city that should reject the message of peace which the seventy were to carry—our Lord said, "*It shall be more tolerable in that day,*" that is, in the great day of judgment, "*for Sodom, than for that city.*" We learn from this, that future punishments will be inflicted in different degrees, according to the different degrees of guilt; and thus while condemnation will be in every case dreadful, so that every sinner ought to flee for safety to the Redeemer, and turn that he may live, it is an awful mistake, if any profligate persons, looking on themselves as lost, act on the principle that it matters not to what pitch of worthlessness they proceed; for, as their guilt increases, so will their misery. We learn, too, from this passage, that the guilt of those who despise Christian privileges is peculiarly great—much greater than that of the heathen; and, therefore, that *we* are under peculiar obligations to receive the truth, as we would show that we value the most signal privileges, and would escape the heaviest doom.\*

Our Lord, being thus led to reflect on the inexcusable obstinacy of many of those among whom he himself had already preached and wrought miracles, exclaims, "*Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.*" From a similar passage, in Matt. xi. 20, it appears that Chorazin and Bethsaida were two of the cities in which most of "Christ's mighty works" had been done, and that he thus upbraided them because they repented not. Chorazin is not mentioned in Scripture, except in these two passages:

\* For an illustration of verse 11, see Lecture on chapter ix. verse 5.



it is supposed to have been situated on the sea of Galilee, near Capernaum. As to Bethsaida, we had occasion, in the preceding chapter, to speak of it, and found Christ preaching and working miracles of healing in the sight of its inhabitants.—Though we are incompetent to solve every difficulty which might be raised on the case, if this was not merely speaking according to human probability,\* he who knew the hearts of men, declared that if such advantages had been enjoyed by Tyre and Sidon (which, for their idolatry and other crimes, were destroyed according to the predictions of the prophets, they would have repented, wearing sackcloth, or the coarsest cloth, and casting dust and ashes on their heads, in token of humiliation and self-abhorrence. It is a fearful thought, that, naturally inclined to resist the means of grace as the human heart always is, the habit of resistance renders it worse and worse, and doubly depraved and obstinate. Consider this, ye who are now lending a deaf ear to the merciful call of the gospel. If you continue to do so a little longer, even the slight compunctions you yet feel may soon utterly vanish, so that your conscience may become seared as with a hot iron, and your hearts fully set in you to do evil; and so, in your case, a lifetime of increasing depravity may end in an eternity of intolerable woe.

In connexion with these two cities, Jesus mentions another, namely, Capernaum. Born at Bethlehem, and having spent his early years at Nazareth, he afterwards abode chiefly at Capernaum; and there, of course, he often taught and did many mighty works. There, however, general impenitence and unbelief reigned. Therefore, he thus apostrophizes that city, "*And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven,*" that is, in point of honourable religious privileges, still more than worldly advantages, "*shall be thrust down to hell*" in heavy punishment, because of the abuse of these privileges. From being a flourishing, it became an insignificant place; and those of the inhabitants who died in unbelief perished with an awful and endless condemnation. The fall and destruction of the wicked are set forth under a similar figure, in such passages as these: "Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever," and "they who have seen him shall say, Where is he?"—"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the

\* See Ezek. iii. 6.

morning!"\*—Now, surely we must acknowledge that our country is peculiarly blessed with religious privileges, as well as with civil. God forbid that the unbelief of its inhabitants should prove its temporal ruin as a nation, and their own still more awful, endless ruin as individuals.

Our Lord closes his instructions to the seventy in words similar to those which, according to Matthew, he addressed to the twelve: "*He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*" It is plain that the way in which men treat a messenger is demonstrative of the feeling they entertain towards him who sent him forth. Hence, the Son being sent by the Father, they that honour the Son honour the Father also, and the contrary; and hence, there is no true religion but Christianity. What is here said of the seventy is also substantially applicable to all ministers who come preaching the truth as it is in Jesus. It would be well if those who undervalue and refuse to obey the words of such, would recollect that, whatever excuses they may plead, and whatever objections they may make to the messengers, when the message itself is plainly from Christ, their rejection of it is the rejection of Christ himself. May the great Head of the Church, by the influences of his Spirit, prepare all your hearts to submit to his kingdom, and to bid all his faithful messengers welcome in his name.

Verse 17: "*And the seventy returned.*" We are not informed how long they were out: from the circumstances of the history, however, it seems as if their mission had not lasted long. Some think that they were sent out when Jesus was about to go up to the feast of tabernacles, and after visiting the appointed places, met him at Jerusalem, or the neighbourhood, before the feast (which lasted eight days) was over. They returned to give an account to their Master of the success of their mission: and so must all who preach the gospel. Yes, it is a serious consideration for you, as well as for us, that we watch for your souls as those who must give an account. Obey, therefore, and submit yourselves in the truth, that we may give in our account with joy, and not with grief; for that would be unprofitable for you.—The seventy returned again "*with joy,*" delighted

\* Job xx. 6; Isa. xiv. 12-15. Addressing himself to Antony, concerning the fall of his colleague, Cicero says, "*Collegam tuum de cœlo detraxisti—Thou hast pulled down thy colleague from heaven;*" and he says of the overthrow of Pompey, "*Ex astris decidisse,*"—that he had fallen from the stars.—*Philippic* ii. and *Ep.* lib. i. 20.

with the miraculous power which they had been enabled to display; and informing our Lord that, though he had only spoken to them of healing diseases, "*even the devils were subject to them,*" and departed from possessed persons at their word pronounced in "*his name,*" and accompanied with his power. On this, Jesus said unto them, "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*" The Son of God had beheld Satan and his angels literally expelled from heaven immediately on their rebellion against the Almighty. His all-seeing eye also accompanied the seventy, beholding what they did in expelling Satan from the bodies of the possessed, and from the height of his power; so that what they told was no new information to him. In this success, too, he beheld a pledge of his final and complete conquest over the devil, for the purpose of destroying whose works he was manifested.

In the 19th verse, Jesus may be considered as renewing the mission of the seventy, and confirming their miraculous gifts: "*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*" In these words he appears to have alluded to Psalm xci. 18: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Our Lord also said, in Mark xvi. 17: "These signs shall follow them that believe"—"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." As addressed to the seventy and to the other followers of Christ, the words may be understood both literally and figuratively. Though many of the inspired teachers were at last to be hurt and put to death, yet they were all secured, for a time, and as long as their labours were necessary. "Be not afraid," said Jesus to Paul, "but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." The same apostle experienced an extraordinary literal protection on the island of Melita; where, though a viper had fastened on his hand, he felt no harm. This implied that the seventy were to be protected from danger while they had any work to do, and that they were to continue to cast out devils. And it implied, in the figurative sense, that not only the seventy, but all believers, were to triumph over all their spiritual adversaries. Personally, and in his people, the Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. Though his

people may be exposed to outward annoyance, their souls are safe. They shall be more than conquerors: and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly.

It would seem as if our Lord saw something not altogether right in the spirit by which the seventy were influenced, when they came to him with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us, through thy name." Or, if they had not actually lost, they were, perhaps, in danger of losing, a becoming frame of mind; so that he saw it proper to put in a caution. They were, probably, in danger of vanity and false trust, because of the wonderful power with which they found themselves invested; at the very time they were confessing that they had done all in his name, they were glorying in the gift, as reflecting honour on themselves; and it is likely that they, with the other disciples, were thinking that such gifts might be the means of raising them to temporal power. However this may have been, Jesus addressed them in words calculated to check all such ideas, and pointed out to them a far superior cause of joy: "*Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.*" It frequently happens that when, in scriptural phraseology, two things are brought together, so that the one is in words recommended, and the other in words forbidden, the passage is to be understood, not absolutely, but comparatively; the thing thus in words forbidden being not wrong in itself, but only of much less importance than the other. Thus, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" that is, mercy rather than sacrifice, for, sacrifice was then required. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" that is, labour more for the latter, than the former; for, diligence to obtain the necessities of this life is certainly incumbent. "Look not at the things which are seen, but at things which are not seen;" that is, not so much, nor so anxiously, at the former as at the latter. And so, in the passage before us, our Lord did not prohibit all joy on account of the success mentioned, for, it was a just cause of joy, and we are told he himself "in that hour rejoiced in spirit;" but he saw that the seventy were looking too much to the mere miracles, and in a great measure forgetting a far nobler circumstance, namely, that connected with their own personal salvation, in which they should have rejoiced much more. It does not necessarily follow, from the way in which he here expresses

himself, that the seventy were, without exception, to be saved, though it is possible, and even likely; our Lord may have addressed himself to them in a way which was generally applicable, as he addressed the twelve as disciples, though one of them was a traitor. The mere gift of miracles, however noble, was not necessarily connected with any spiritual and everlasting good; for these are the words of Christ: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The special love of God, a personal interest in Christ, and the ordinary converting and sanctifying influences of the Spirit, were certainly, in all cases, of much more importance than extraordinary and miraculous gifts, however numerous and astonishing; therefore, our Lord said to the seventy, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Waiving now all further reference to the seventy, and to every other part of the passage, we shall expatiate a little, in conclusion, on this last verse, in a way directly applicable at the present moment, and with an earnest desire that the joyful and awakening truths which it embodies may be brought home to your judgment and feelings by the Spirit of the living God.

The expression, having their "names written in heaven," is in allusion to the custom of enrolling the names of those who are admitted freemen of any city, the register of which citizenship is preserved with care. Among the Jews, this also served to show the genealogy and place of birth. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there."\* Now, the people of God may be considered as having their names written in heaven, in respect both of the eternal purpose according to the election of grace, and of their actual introduction into the kingdom of God when they are converted in time. The first idea, namely, that of their enrolment in the divine purpose, is chiefly intended in Rev. xvii. 8, where it is said that they shall wonder after the beast, "whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." And the second idea, or accession to the Church by actual con-

\* Ps. lxxxvii. 6.

version, is chiefly intended in Eph. ii. 19, where it is said, of those who are reconciled, and who have access, through Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father, that they "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The following additional passages, in which God's people are represented as enrolled, or written down, and which refer, some more plainly to the one idea, and some to the other, though they may all include both, throw still further light on the subject. Isa. iv. 3: "He that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." Dan. xii. 1: "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Phil. iv. 3: "My fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life." Rev. xiii. 8: "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him," that is, the beast, "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And Rev. xx. 12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were found written in the books, according to their works."

Such, then, being the nature and blessed consequences of this enrolment, surely every wise man should be anxiously desirous to know if his name be written in heaven. But is such knowledge attainable? It is attainable by believers. It is true that they have no access to the book of the divine decrees, so as to be able to obtain a direct sight of their names there. But, there is another ascertainable point, from which their registration there may certainly be inferred; and to this point their inquiring attention should be turned. You may know, my friends, that the Lord intended to save you, if he has actually saved you. If you have been convinced of sin, and led to the Saviour; if you have been renewed in the spirit of your mind, and created again in Christ Jesus unto good works; if you are born from above, and have a heavenly nature; if you are pressing into the kingdom of God, and seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; if you are looking habitually to heaven, and chiefly concerned to prepare for heaven; if you have set your affections on things above, and are giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure; in a word, if your treasure, and your heart, and your conversation are in hea-

ven, then you may certainly conclude that your names are written in heaven.

But give ear, all ye of whom, notwithstanding all your infirmities, this may be truly said, while we repeatedly urge on your consideration the blessed fact that you have far greater cause for joy in your names being written in heaven than you possibly can have in anything else. Be your advantages in other respects as numerous, and as great, as they may, here is an advantage which outweighs them all: and be your other causes of joy what they may, here is a cause of joy in which all others should be, as it were, lost and swallowed up.

Are you possessed of a sufficiency, or even of *wealth*, of this world's goods? Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that you are rich, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Earthly riches call for your gratitude, as placing you above want, and putting it in your power to do good; but what are they in comparison of spiritual and eternal riches—"the unsearchable riches of Christ?" All things are yours, for ye are Christ's: therefore rejoice in this. Are you *learned* in human knowledge? Such knowledge is far better than ignorance, and may bring some pleasure and advantage along with it. Notwithstanding, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. In human wisdom there is often much sorrow, and there never can be safety and peace: rejoice, therefore, rather because you have the wisdom which is from above, and because the Holy Scriptures have made you wise to salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. They who are thus wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever. Are you *honoured*, and highly esteemed, by your fellow-creatures? This is so far well: notwithstanding, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven; for, while earthly honour is transitory and vain, the honour that cometh from God is substantial and permanent, and he says to each of you, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Are you invested with worldly *power*? Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven; "for he that is slow to wrath is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city:" and you have power to tread on serpents and scorpions, in the spiritual sense, being strong in the

Lord, and in the power of his might. Therefore, rejoice in putting forth this power, remembering the words of your Lord, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Have you kind and pious *friends*? Be thankful to God and to them: notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. "He that loveth father or mother more than me," saith Christ, "is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Endearing as such connexions may be, ought you not to be still more joyful, when you think that you have God for your Father, and Jesus for your friend—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother? Indeed, no connexion with any human being whatever, however exalted, or excellent, not even the being nearly related to Christ himself according to the flesh, could compare, in importance, with the being savingly interested in him. When "a certain woman lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked," he replied, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Are you in bodily *health*? It is a great blessing: but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven—rather rejoice because you have undergone a spiritual cure, and by Christ's stripes have been healed. It is well that your bodies, but it is far better that your souls, prosper and are in health. Rejoice in this, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Your temporal *life* is continued, and this is a great blessing, for, truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. Rather rejoice, however, rejoice still more, because you are quickened to spiritual life. Valuable as your temporal life is, your spiritual life is still more so, for, you cannot live here always, but when death shall send you away, your spiritual life secures your entrance on life everlasting. Your life being hid with Christ in God, when he who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Are you blessed with *civil immunities* in this land of freemen? More joyful may you be because of your emancipation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and



your having come to mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem. Are you favoured with distinguished outward *religious privileges*? Happy are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear, those things which many prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear, but were not so favoured. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Rather rejoice because these privileges have been accompanied to you with the special grace of God, to render them effectual. Many have abused and are abusing the very same external privileges, while you have improved and are improving them, to your souls' good and your Saviour's glory. With what humility, and yet with what joy, does it become you to reflect on this! "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you, but your Father who is in heaven." Give him the praise, and rejoice in his salvation: and "may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." You see, then, that you have greater cause for rejoicing because your names are written in heaven, than you can possibly have in any other advantages, however numerous and great they may be.

But this is not all, for it may with truth be said, not only that this is the greatest among all your causes of joy, but that this affords you a sufficient cause of joy in opposition to the greatest disadvantages and sorrows. Are you poor? Rejoice, notwithstanding of your poverty, because your names are written in heaven. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"—"Though the fig tree shall not blossom, yet rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation." Are you exposed to trouble because of your religion? Rejoice notwithstanding:—"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for Christ's sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." Are you sickly and weakly? Rejoice notwithstanding, for your souls are recovering, and you are going to the place where the inhabitants shall never say, I am sick, because the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity. Are you friendless? Rejoice notwithstanding, because your names are written in heaven. You have an Almighty friend, and there is no creature to divide with him your affection. Should you be necessarily

detained from religious ordinances, rejoice notwithstanding; for God is ever ready to meet with you. In the prospect of death rejoice notwithstanding, because your names are written in heaven; for then it is that your perfect happiness draweth nigh.

In short, in whatever circumstances you may be placed, whether prosperous or adverse, rejoice in this glorious privilege. The maintenance of this joy is most important to your active obedience, for the joy of the Lord will be your strength. "Rejoice, then, evermore."—"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."—"Be glad in the Lord, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." That you should be dejected is most unbecoming of your privileges, and most unjust to your God. "Rejoice with trembling," but rejoice with all your heart. Rejoice with all humility, but with all confidence. It is meet that you should rejoice now in that in which you shall rejoice for ever: for "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

But, the right dividing of the word of truth calls for the concluding admonition that those of you who are not so joined to the Lord, and to the Church, on earth, by conversion, as to have reason to believe that your names are written in heaven, have no solid cause of joy in anything. The converse of this Scripture holds true: and we beseech you to note this, lest you deceive yourselves to your ruin. What though you are outwardly prosperous? Notwithstanding, rejoice not in this, for you have no evidence that your names are written in heaven. Why boast of your liberty, when you are the slaves of corruption? Why speak of your honour, when you have reason to fear that you shall come forth to shame and everlasting contempt? Why rejoice in your health, when, spiritually, your whole head is sick, and your whole heart faint, and from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head, there is nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores? Your bodily health cannot last for ever; sickness, your last sickness, will come, and death will come, and where are you then? Why, ye profane ones, and why, ye decent formalists, boast of your religious privileges? Think of the words, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell." Why rejoice even in life itself? at least,

why rejoice in life as you are now spending it? While you live in this way, you are only treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of God's righteous judgment. Nay, what would be all your griefs, if you should be in trouble, compared with the grief which should now press on you in the thought of your present and coming condemnation? Cease, then, from your foolish rejoicing. "Be afflicted and mourn and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Repent in dust and ashes. Betake yourselves to the free mercy of God, by faith in the Redeemer. Thus, though weeping may endure for a night, joy will come in the morning; you will have reason ever after to rejoice in everything, whether painful or pleasant; and at last, the sanctified joys of time will usher in the triumphant joys of eternity.

## LECTURE LIII.

## LUKE X. 21-24.

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. 23. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: 24. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”

THE seventy had just returned to Christ, and related to him, with much exultation, the miracles which they had performed on their mission; and he, perceiving that they were dwelling on the mere miraculous gift, to the forgetfulness of a far more important point, had said to them: “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” At the same time, what had happened was, in itself, and still more in its consequences, a just cause of joy; and Luke now tells us that “*in that hour Jesus*” himself “*rejoiced*”—greatly rejoiced, for so the word signifies. And is it not refreshing to find him who was so correctly described as “the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” now rejoicing? He rejoiced, when he saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven; and he still rejoices in every instance of Satan’s overthrow. He rejoices over every single lost sheep that is found; and the pleasure to arise from the united triumphs of his love, in the salvation of all his people, was an important ingredient in the joy which was set before him, and for which he endured the cross, despising the shame. When he thus sees of the travail of his soul, he is satisfied. Let us mark, my friends, this truly ingenuous and winning motive to exchange sin and ruin, for piety and salvation, namely, that we shall thereby gratify the divine Redeemer,

and give joy to the heart which, for us, was melted like wax, and pierced through with many sorrows. Surely, we are the most obdurate and ungrateful of creatures, if we deem any pleasure whatever equal to the pleasure of pleasing him.

Jesus rejoiced "*in spirit*;"—his joy was inward, and deeply seated, and then vented itself in words of grateful praise. And so, all our prayers and praises should be the expression of the sincere feelings of our hearts. In this act of praise, Christ addressed himself to his "*Father*." God the Father is Christ's Father, in respect both of his human and divine nature; that is, in respect both of his miraculous conception and eternal generation. This relation of Father and Son, in respect of Christ's divine nature, implies equality of nature: for while, in respect of his human nature, Christ says, "My Father is greater than I;" in respect of his divine, he says, "I and my Father are one." In like manner, in so far as it can be said of us dependent creatures, we should come to God as our Father, not merely as he is our Creator, but as he is our reconciled Father through Jesus Christ. Jesus also addresses his Father, as "*Lord of heaven and earth*." Heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. He is the Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Owner of all. And so we should regard and acknowledge him in all our approaches. Taking the whole of this invocation together, we are reminded of the combination of reverence and confidence which becomes us in our devotional addresses. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" and yet we should, at the same time, guard against indecent familiarity and levity; for the Lord of heaven and earth is worthy to be feared, and he will be sanctified in all that draw nigh to him.

"*I thank thee*,"\* says Jesus: the word might have been rendered, I confess unto thee, or, I full agree with thee; and the nature of the subject shows that this is a confession of joy, thanksgiving, and praise. I thank thee, "*that thou hast hid these things*," the mysteries of the gospel, "*from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*." There may here be some reference to the description of persons to whom the truths of the gospel were first miraculously revealed, in order that they might publish them authoritatively to the world. God did not choose, for this purpose, philosophers or politicians, or scribes or pharisees, but plain,

\* Ἐξομολογοῦμαι.

simple, and in general, illiterate men. Now, this was a reason of thankfulness. Had philosophers been chosen, they might have debased the gospel by a mixture of their own theories: had secular politicians been chosen, they might have sought to spread it by dexterous contrivances, or carnal power, and thus one grand proof of its divinity might have been wanting. This, too, showed God's sovereignty, in proceeding in a way that poured contempt on human sagacity and human power.

But these words seem chiefly to refer to the description of persons who then had, and who always have, gospel truths revealed in a saving way to their minds. Our Lord says that God hides these things from the wise and prudent. We are not to suppose that God exerts any positive influence on the minds of men, to conceal from them the truth and nature of the gospel, and to make them unbelieving and disobedient; for that would be blasphemously to represent him as the author of sin. The strong expressions, *blinding* and *hardening*, which frequently occur in Scripture, are only properly understood when we remember that those who obstinately and wilfully shut their eyes and harden their hearts to the truth, are often judicially and righteously left by God to their own blindness and hardness, so that they, of course, continue in them; and when we remember that, according to Scripture language, and in this sense, God is said to do what he permits. This opens up at once the strong and pious meaning of what is said of God's hardening Pharaoh's heart. This, too, explains the passage repeatedly quoted from Isaiah, as in John xii. 39: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias had said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias when he saw Christ's glory, and spake of him." And nearly to the same purpose are these words, Acts xxviii. 24: "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying: Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed: lest they should see

with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heat them." You will observe that, notwithstanding these strong expressions, the blindness of unbelievers is imputed to themselves, and not to God, in the positive sense implying guilt, for, it is said, "Their eyes have they closed:" that is, they themselves have willingly closed their own eyes. While the withholding of needful grace from the obstinate ought to be felt as a most awakening motive to seek after God, and to yield to convictions, it can never be justly viewed as a discouragement by any who are in earnest about the salvation of their souls; but, on the contrary, it implies that instead of disappointing those who are seeking after him, he will thoroughly illuminate their minds, and soften their hearts, nay, that he is already graciously dealing with their souls.

When the things of salvation are said to be hid from "the wise and prudent," we are not to suppose that there is any inconsistency between the gospel and true wisdom and prudence; or that the gospel is in any way irrational, and cannot stand the test of reason; or hurtful, and incompatible with our true advantage. On the contrary, Christ—Christ crucified—the way of salvation unfolded through the Redeemer, is emphatically, "the wisdom of God;" the doctrine and service of Christ are in the highest degree reasonable; and none are so justly entitled to be called prudent, as those who seek after that godliness which is "profitable unto all things." Nor is it intended to be here affirmed that all uncommonly learned and prudent men reject the gospel; for it is well known that there have been not a few instances of men of the very first literary and philosophical attainments, who have been distinguished for their Christian piety, and whose talents have been consecrated, and eminently blessed, to the promotion of religion in the world. Still, however, the wisdom from above, is something essentially different from the wisdom which is from beneath; the gospel, though wisdom itself, is something entirely different from the wisdom of men. "Howbeit," saith Paul to the Corinthians, "we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world." Being, then something quite different, this circumstance alone may show that it is not very surprising, at least not so surprising as to be any good occasion of stumbling, that many who attain to the other come short of this. But this is not all;

there is not only a difference but an opposition between these kinds of wisdom, when men trust in their human wisdom, and are proud of it: and to this unhappy state of mind our Lord seems here particularly to refer. Nor is even this all: for, the obliquity of the understanding of fallen man with regard to spiritual things, causes him, when he is trusting to himself, to look on heavenly wisdom as folly; and the depravity of the heart of fallen man presents another obstacle to the holy and purifying doctrines of the gospel, and still further thickens the gloom, and shuts out the light. Hence, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." All who walk theoretically and practically in the vanity of their unenlightened and unrenewed mind, have "the understanding darkened, and are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The blindness and the depravity mutually aggravate each other.

Though, therefore, nothing is so truly wise and prudent as to embrace the gospel, it is a fact that many who are commonly considered as wise and prudent, and many who have really made great attainments in human wisdom, and who are in prosperous and eminent stations of life, reject the gospel. The words of the apostle to the Corinthians are still very generally applicable: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

Our Lord gives thanks to his Father that, though he hides these things from the wise and prudent, "*he reveals them unto babes.*" We observed that God does not exert any positive influence to blind and harden; but we now remark that he does put forth positive energy to enlighten and save. Of the two leading meanings of the word "reveal" we shall speak afterwards. Adverting here to the meaning of the word "babes," we may observe, that the power of divine grace is sometimes signally displayed in those who are very young, and who may be called babes,



or children, in the literal sense. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies," saith the Psalmist, "that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger;" and this received a remarkable fulfilment on the occasion of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" Consider this passage of Gospel history well, ye children who are now present! You will find it in Matthew, 21st chapter, the 15th and 16th verses. Did these children, long ago, in the temple of Jerusalem, cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David"—that is, Ascribe blessing and praise to Jesus?—why should you not cry Hosanna too? Is he not as blessed and as gracious a Saviour to-day as he was then? Is he not still saying in his Word, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven?" Does it not, then, become you, as soon as you can understand and feel anything of his grace, to imitate these children of Jerusalem in their regard to Christ? It does. See then that you know him, and believe in him, and love him, and obey him, and join heartily in the song of praise to him, whenever it is sung.

But, by babes we are here chiefly to understand all those who, whatever be their age, are lowly, humble, and teachable. That children, notwithstanding their natural forwardness, are, generally speaking, more sensible of their inferiority, and more simple and teachable than grown-up persons, is certain; and therefore, Christ refers to children as an emblem of his true disciples. When we consider the first disciples, we see that they were generally men of lowly birth and station, and unlearned; and the same holds true, for the most part, of his people in every age. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" But, whatever may be their outward circumstances, and their worldly advantages, or disadvantages, those who have the things of salvation revealed to them, are babes in the sense of simplicity and teachableness. "God resisteth the proud, but

giveth grace to the humble.”—“The meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach his way.” Here, however, lest any should imagine that a man’s humility and teachableness, which have so happy a result, are of himself, so as to be, in some degree, the meritorious cause of his being made to differ from others, and of his salvation; let it be remembered, that it is the grace of God, from the very first, which causes him to differ—makes him as a babe, and makes him willing in the day of God’s power. While, therefore, we are to be careful to cultivate this spirit of humility as a duty, we are to look for it as a grace all along.

Let us observe now, the two different senses in which God reveals these things. The one sense is the extraordinary and miraculous revelation, by which he discovered to prophets and apostles things formerly unknown, or imperfectly known, in order to their being published to the world as the rule of faith and conduct, or to be useful in some other way, distinct as to the matter, from the already written Word. In this sense of inspiration, we are to understand the contents of the Scriptures in general to have been revealed to them: and in this sense, the word is plainly used in such passages as these: “I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”—“I neither received it” (that is, the gospel) “of men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”\* The other sense in which the word is used, is to express the ordinary, saving teaching of the Spirit—the aid whereby men are enabled to understand and receive what is already written in Scripture, and are made wise to salvation. This seems chiefly intended in the passage under consideration, even with regard to these miraculously gifted disciples, for their “names are written in heaven;” though, you will observe, that with regard to those who were miraculously gifted and also brought into a state of personal salvation, it must have been applicable in both senses. This personal, saving discovery of the truth is also described in the words of our Lord to Peter, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.” And this chiefly, if not exclusively, is the

\* Eph. iii. 3; Gal. i. 12.

meaning of the expression, when Paul prays for all the saints at Ephesus, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." In the former sense—that is, the sense of miraculous inspiration—these things were revealed only to a few, and at particular times, who yet might not be believers; and the revelation is long ago completed and closed. In the latter sense, these things have been, and will continue to be, revealed, or savingly discovered, to all the people of God in every age, that all of them may be brought to glory.

Our Lord concludes this brief but weighty prayer, in these words, "*Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" Referring to what he had just stated concerning God hiding these things from the wise and prudent, and revealing them unto babes, the "even so" may be considered both as a strong affirmation that such was the fact, and also as a hearty acquiescence in it. It is as if he had said, "So it is, and so let it be, since such is thy will." It is a salutary, though humbling and difficult lesson for men to learn, that God is sovereign in the communication of his mercy, and that, though the reason of his having mercy lies not in the merit of its object, but in his own will, that will is not a blind, or unjust fate, but is influenced by good reasons, though they are unfathomable by us—is, in short, holy, just, and good. Such a view of the divine sovereignty as this, is most rational, as well as most scriptural: it is directly calculated to produce a spirit of pious dependence on God; and it is often the best resource to his people, in the contemplation of many of his mysterious dealings. In reference to this point, the apostle tells the Ephesians, that God proceeds "according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace," and "according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself," and that he "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Let us, like our Saviour, devoutly acknowledge the truth, and thankfully acquiesce in the rectitude and goodness of this doctrine, and we shall find both its sanctifying and comforting efficacy. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who

bath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Having thus addressed himself, in a direct act of thanksgiving, to his Father, with his eyes, we may suppose, lifted up to heaven, Jesus now looks to all who were present, and thus proceeds, in a connected train of thought: "*All things are delivered to me of my Father.*" As God, Christ is equal with the Father, and one with him; but as Mediator between God and man (and it is in this character he here speaks), he sustains a delegated authority. He is appointed, in the divine counsel of mercy to negotiate in the glorious business of the salvation of sinners by the covenant of grace; so that he not only has all things in himself as God, but all things committed, delivered over, to him as Mediator, for the purpose of being communicated to those whom he came to save, all of whom, moreover, are themselves delivered to him to be saved, while all things are rendered subservient to him, and put under his feet, for this end. It hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, in order that we, out of his fulness, should receive grace upon grace. Very similar to what he says here are his words at the beginning of his intercessory prayer: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him:" so also, after his resurrection, he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth:" and at his ascension, God set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, and gave him a name which is above every name.

Our Lord goes on to say, "*And no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father;*" that is, none—no person, fully understands the Son but the Father. There are mysteries relating to the Son, which none but the Father can comprehend; and this shows the Son to be, strictly speaking, divine. "*And*" no man knoweth "*who the Father is, but the Son;*" that is, none fully knows the Father, except the Son; and this also proves the Son to be God, and possessed of that infinite knowledge which is necessary to comprehend an infinite object. When our Lord says that none knoweth the Son but the Father, and none the Father but the Son, he is not to be understood as speaking to the exclusion of

the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of wisdom and of perfect understanding. What is here said is quite consistent with the passage to the Corinthians: \* “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” These passages, when compared, and brought together, plainly establish the doctrine of the Trinity, three persons in one God, united in infinite wisdom, and in the perfect knowledge of each other. Christ adds, that no man knoweth who the Father is, but “*he to whom the Son will reveal him.*”—“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The whole of that knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation, which has been published to the world, has been revealed by Christ himself, or by his divinely commissioned prophets and apostles, for his sake. Besides, no individual comes to the personally saving knowledge of God, except by the particular revelation, or discovery, of scriptural truth to his soul, by the grace and Spirit of the Son of God. He opens men’s understandings to understand the Scriptures, and teaches them rightly to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

Then Jesus, turning away from the multitude, “*said to his disciples, privately,*” or apart, “*Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see: for I tell you that many prophets and kings,*” or, as in Matthew,† prophets and righteous men, “*have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*” The privileges of the Church were well understood by the ancient prophets and worthies (among whom were some of kingly dignity), to be intended to be so much greater after the coming of Messiah than they were before, that they looked forward to his coming with great desire. Jacob spoke of him, on his death-bed, as Shiloh, and “waited for his salvation.” Abraham “rejoiced to see,” or greatly desired to see, “his day, and he saw it,” by faith, though not by sight, “and was glad.” David evidently looked forward with great delight to Him in whom his kingdom was to be established for ever. Messiah’s com-

\* 1 Cor. ii. 10.—This mutual and equal knowledge is declared, John x. 15, q. v.

† Mat. xiii. 17.

ing was a constant subject of prayer with the Jewish Church. He who was "the Desire of all nations," was especially the Desire of his own. The spirit of the prophets in regard to gospel salvation, is thus described by Peter: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The Old Testament saints "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them." The outward privileges then enjoyed by those who saw and heard what these disciples saw and heard, were very great—great beyond those of the Old Testament saints. But more especially, blessed were they whose eyes were opened to see, and their ears to hear, these things, so as to believe to the saving of their souls. Already blessed in the light of truth, the favour of God, and peace of conscience, they were preparing, and looking for the perfect and endless blessedness of immortality.

A few things may yet be added, for the further improvement of this passage.

1. *Let me ask you if you resemble Christ in rejoicing at the success of true religion?* He greatly rejoiced in spirit, and gave thanks to his Father, that Satan was dethroned, and that, though some were obstinate, others were blessed with a saving discovery of divine things. In like manner, all his genuine followers are alive to the importance of the overthrow of Satan from tyrannizing over the minds of sinners, and are glad when they see or hear of God's having savingly revealed his Son in the hearts of any. When Barnabas came to Antioch, and "had seen the grace of God," then "he was glad;"—"for he was a good man," and that joy was one evidence of his goodness. When Paul and Barnabas and certain other Christians "passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, they caused great joy unto all the brethren." Now, how is it with you in this respect? If it be really so that the sight, or intelligence, of such success, bring you no pleasure, then you have not the Spirit of Christ, and of course, are none of his: or, if it bring you only a very slight and questionable satisfaction, then the faith is at a very low ebb in your souls, and you are peculiarly called on to be watchful, and to strengthen the things which are ready to die.

Surely, all who love the Lord, and are alive to the value of the human soul, ought to look on the conversion of sinners as the most important of earthly events, and be very glad, and give glory to God, when they hear of such a happy change taking place on men, of whatever rank, or whatever country. When people that were walking in darkness see the great Light, and God, by their accession, multiplies his own nation, then let our joy be increased: let us joy before him according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

If you would be saved,

2. *Beware of being proud of your own wisdom and prudence, and cherish the humility and teachableness of babes.* Human learning is never despised but by those who are destitute of it; and common, worldly prudence, is never despised but by those who are themselves lamentably stupid, or rash: but learning and prudence are both dangerous, when not under a higher than human guidance. "Though ignorance is certainly to be avoided, and that man is brutish who desires not to know; yet it is much to be lamented, that people of the finest parts, and those who have the greatest compass of human erudition, are most exposed to the infelicity of thinking highly of themselves, and of becoming dupes to their own vanity, or the splendid fallacies of the human understanding. In proportion as they can make these fallacies shining and specious, they are the more liable to be ensnared themselves, as well as more dangerous in deluding others. Most of the arch-heretics were men of undoubted parts and accomplishments, as to the world; but they sought distinction by those parts, invented new opinions to create it, and at length became the victims of their own vanity and pride. The wisest of men, or rather God by him, gives a strong caution, therefore, on this head, 'Lean not to thine own understanding.' Nothing can be truly wisdom, which does not render a man better and happier for eternity. Where, then, shall we find this, except in the Bible? By whom shall we obtain this, but by the Spirit of wisdom? And what is he who despises and rejects both? The answer," to this last question, "is a harsh monosyllable in proud ears; and a man would not venture to utter it, but from something better than men's authority."\* "He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool." Beware of this. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the

\* Serle.

kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." The gospel is proposed to you, not with the view of asking your opinion on it, or of exercising your ingenuity, but as that by which, according as you receive or reject it, you are to be saved or condemned. Give attention to it, then, when it is read and preached; attend to it with that deep sense of its importance, with that conviction of your own insufficiency, with that spirit of implicit submission to the declaration of Scripture, and with that earnest prayer for divine instruction, which God wisely requires, and which he will graciously bless.

3. We should learn, from the 22d verse, *never to separate the truths of what is called natural religion from the gospel*. The idea that there is, or can be, any true and acceptable religion whatever, apart from the revelation of Christ, is here shown to be quite preposterous. The true Witness declares that no man can know the Father except he to whom he shall reveal him. Hence, all worship offered to God, not through Christ, is offered to an unknown God, to a God of men's own imagination, and is therefore idolatrous. Jesus Christ not only reveals the true God, but is himself the way, the truth, and the life; so that no man cometh unto the Father but through him. Let, then, all our ideas of religion be of a truly Christian complexion. "Ye believe in God," saith Christ, "believe also in me." "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him."

4. *Let us be thankful for the precious religious privileges which we enjoy, and careful to improve them*. All things considered, our privileges are at least as great as were the privileges of those to whom Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." But we cannot too anxiously inquire whether we be improving these privileges to our actual personal salvation: for thus alone it is that they can ultimately prove blessings to us. Lord, grant that we may not "receive the grace of God in vain," but may be of those of whom, in the highest sense of the words, it may be said, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

Lastly: Are we blessed because our eyes see, and our ears hear these things?—then, *Christian benevolence should*



*lead us to feel for those who enjoy no such privileges, and to do everything we can to extend them to the utmost corners of the earth.* As in Old Testament times there were those who longed for Messiah's coming into the world, so there are those now, in other places of the earth, who desire his coming to them in the ordinances of his word and ministry, and in the blessings of his salvation. There are who are uttering the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us," and who would be ready at once to welcome the messengers with the words, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that publish good tidings of peace!" And shall their cry and their desire be disregarded? There are multitudes, too, much greater multitudes, who have no desire, indeed, for Christian privileges, but who have a longing desire for something which they can never find, for something to satisfy the restless cravings of the heart, who are panting to see and hear something which can give them rest. That something, though they know it not, is the gospel. For this the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together. And shall we not reckon ourselves happy, if, by our exertions and prayers, we can do anything towards causing that gospel to be published to every creature under heaven, that men may be blessed in Jesus, and all nations call him blessed?

## LECTURE LIV.

## LUKE X. 25-37.

“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26. He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27. And he, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30. And Jesus, answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37. And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”

THOUGH there are two cases mentioned by Matthew and Mark, which are, in some respects, similar to the case of this lawyer, this interesting account is peculiar to Luke. A certain man who was a “*lawyer*,” or scribe, whose profession it was to study and expound the law of Moses, formally “*stood up*” in the midst of the people who were listening to Christ’s instructions, “*and tempted him;*”—put a question to him with the view of trying him, or proving him, and, perhaps, impiously and treacherously expecting that he would commit himself. But, taking it in the least offensive view, as simply a trying of Christ’s skill, with the view of showing off himself, the procedure of the lawyer, on this occasion, suggests useful cautions to all inquirers. How unbecoming and sinful, for example, is it to turn to the written word of Christ, not to learn from it, but to judge it! how unbecoming for the blind and erring

creature to pretend to decide upon the skill of the all-wise and divine Prophet! Instead of being guilty of such presumptuous self-confidence, which can only lead to ruin, let us sit humbly at the feet of Jesus, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls. We here learn, too, that a good question may be put from a bad, or inadequate motive, and are reminded to attend to our motives, as well as to our words. Eternal life is a most important topic, and should be often spoken of, but it is not enough to speak of it in any way. To converse and inquire about God and eternity, in a spirit of carelessness, disputatiousness, and captiousness, instead of being commendable and useful, is sinful and hurtful, and is a taking of God's name in vain.

Addressing Jesus by the appellation of "*Master*," or Teacher, whether with feigned or real respect, does not exactly appear, though he was well entitled to the name, as he was indeed "a Teacher sent from God;" the lawyer put this question to him, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" There is nothing in the way in which this question is worded which would, of itself, have been sufficient to show the self-righteous spirit of its proposer, but we are plainly told afterwards that such was his spirit, and, therefore, we must keep it in view from the first. The word "do" does not necessarily imply the idea of doing with the view of establishing a meritorious claim to life, for it might be used in a very extensive sense, as implying both faith and holiness—whatever God requires, either as the means of acceptance, or as the way in which accepted persons are bound to walk. The Philippian jailer put this very similar question to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and they evidently considered it as a very proper question, put in a right spirit, and answered it in the sense referring to the means of acceptance, by saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In this case, however, our Lord, perceiving the character of the man, resolved to try the lawyer who came to try him, and referred the question back to him, saying, "*What is written in the law? how readest thou?*" The law, or word of God, is the only rule of faith and practice, and to it, in every case, the ultimate appeal should be made. As to this man, being himself a professed student and expounder of the law, he must have been expected to be well acquainted with it. To our Lord's question the

lawyer replied, quoting in substance Deut. vi. 5, and Lev. xix. 18, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he, (Jesus) said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.*"

It is, at the first glance, somewhat difficult to determine on what principle this passage ought to be interpreted, whether as chiefly teaching us the impossibility of being justified by the law, or as chiefly reminding us of the duty we owe to God and our neighbour. On mature consideration, I am inclined to think that a full, impartial, and faithful exposition requires that both of the ideas should be considered as pervading the whole. Taking what is afterwards said of this man's desire to justify himself in connexion with the words, "This do, and thou shalt live," we are immediately reminded that the law, as a covenant, requires perfect obedience, and that no mere man can ever render such obedience. Even in this view of the law as a covenant, the lawyer "answered right;" for he could not have given a more complete summary of its demands; and our Lord declared that if he perfectly observed them, he should be saved. But these words of our Lord as plainly implied that, if the lawyer ever had already failed, or should hereafter fail, of perfect obedience, he could not obtain life from the law, but must be judged as a transgressor. This is exactly the view given by the apostle Paul, who reasons to prove that sinners cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, and then goes on to open up the only way of acceptance which is now practicable, namely, the way of free grace through faith in the righteousness of Christ. See Rom. iii. 19-25; Gal. iii. 10-14. Let us, then, mark this truth well. Let us not seek to be under the law as a covenant of works; for, if we will only hear the law, we shall hear it pronouncing sentence against us. When we consider how we have broken this holy, just, and good law, let us not seek to justify ourselves, but let us plead guilty before God, and cast ourselves on his mercy, by faith in the blood of his Son. Let us seek after righteousness, not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith.

At the same time, let none suppose that because sinners who have once broken the law must for ever despair of compensating for past sins, and of acquiring the divine favour by their own doings, and must have recourse to the

gospel of grace, they may therefore be indifferent to the duties of piety and morality. Let none suppose that they may continue in sin because grace abounds. While the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, Christ brings us back to the duties of the law, though not for life, yet for direction. His people, though not perfectly conformed to the law, are yet renewed and sanctified, so as habitually to delight in it after the inward man, and to obey it in the outward conduct. The law—that is, the moral law—is the rule of their life. The scribe answered right, therefore, in this view also, when he gave this abridgment of duty. Our Lord himself gave a similar answer on a somewhat similar occasion, as we read in Matt. xxii. 35–40. In answer to the lawyer's question, "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Lend a willing ear, then, while we now direct your attention to these two great commandments of the law.

First, *the duty of love to God*. And here we begin with observing, that there is no such principle as love to God in the heart of any man by nature, but that it is a principle *divinely implanted in the renewed hearts of believers*. Love to God constituted part of man's righteousness when he was in his original state of innocence; but, in rebelling against God, he forsook this his first love. Men are now described as "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" and as "enemies in their minds by wicked works." Without a renovation of mind, then, we can have no love of God in us. This holy affection proceeds from God himself, being implanted and cherished in the soul by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Moses said,\* "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live:" and the apostle Paul teaches† that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Nor is it to be overlooked, that the way in which the Holy Spirit produces this love is by bringing men to the knowledge and belief of the love of God manifested towards them through Jesus Christ.

\* Deut. xxx. 6.

† Rom. v. 5.

The belief of the gospel destroys the natural enmity of the mind, and causes us to "love God because he hath first loved us."

Such is the origin of this principle, and when we consider its nature, we observe that it implies *a high esteem of God*. Love considers God as the most excellent of beings, as infinitely glorious, holy, and compassionate. It surveys, with admiration and delight, the bright display of his perfections in his works of creation and providence, but especially in the wonderful plan of redemption. It is the language of him who truly loves God, "Who in heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto thee? thy favour is life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life."

Love to God implies, also, an earnest *desire for communion with God, and the enjoyment of him*. The soul that loves God, sensible of its own indigence, and of the insufficiency of all earthly objects for its happiness, makes choice of him as its sure and everlasting portion. Unsatisfied with present attainments, it aspires to more full communion with God here, and to the perfect and endless enjoyment of him hereafter. Therefore, love to God vents itself in such language as this, "While many say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou on me the light of thy countenance."—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth whom I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart fail: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Observe, again, that true love to God is a *judicious* principle. It is not a blind, enthusiastic feeling, it is not a foolish fondness for an object whose excellence is not at all understood; but it is the result of the deliberate conviction of the understanding. Without this solid and rational foundation, it would degenerate into absolute enthusiasm; for, what is enthusiasm, but the baseless fabric of the imagination, or certain extravagant feelings not proceeding from any distinct, scriptural knowledge of their object? Hence Paul prayed for the Philippians, that their "love might abound, yet more and more, in all knowledge, and in all judgment."

Further, love to God is an *active* principle. It is a fact that here, as in common life, love produces a carefulness not to offend, but to please its object. But, what is peculiarly noticeable is, that the obedience which love produces is of the right kind. "This is the love of God," says John,

“that we keep his commandments.” The obedience of terror is the obedience of an enemy, and not of a friend—of a slave, and not of a willing servant or son. Such an obedience would not be esteemed by men, much less can it be esteemed by the Searcher of hearts, who judges of all actions by the principles from which they proceed. But love is a principle which prompts, and sweetens to ourselves, our obedience, and at the same time, renders it acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ.

True love to God is also a *supreme* love. Our love is due to our fellow-creatures: but then, it must be properly suited to the nature of the ties which bind us, and always in due subordination to the love of God. “He that loveth father or mother more than me,” says our Divine Redeemer, “is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.” Nay, the kind of love which is due to our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, does not belong in any degree to any creature, so that we are taught to consider love to God to be, in this sense, an exclusive principle. He must have our whole hearts. The required measure of this love is thus stated in the passage before us: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.” I am not sure that much satisfaction could be given by criticisms on the particular words here chosen by our Lord, or that it is intended that we should look on them as furnishing any nice distinctions as to the powers of the mind. Perhaps, by the “heart” is meant chiefly, the affections; by the “soul,” either the immortal principle, or the principle of life; by the “strength,” the intensity with which every power should be engaged; and by the “mind,” the intellect, or understanding. At all events, the general meaning of the passage is very obvious, and very strong.\* It is that love to God should engage all the faculties of our soul, and that in the highest degree of which they are susceptible.

Before leaving this topic, let me beseech you to consider whether you love the Lord God. Look inwards, to see on what your hearts are chiefly set; and look outwards, to see on what your strength is chiefly spent. It is to be feared that if Jesus were now to pronounce an opinion on some of you, he would have to say, as he did to certain Jews of old, “I know that ye have not the love of God in you.” Con-

\* *Id petam, idque persequar corde, et animo, atque viribus.—Plautus.*

sider how unreasonable, ungrateful, and sinful it is not to love the greatest, the wisest, and the best of Beings. Consider, too, that not to love God is to hate him, for there is here no medium. How dangerous is this! "If he whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward them that hate him." Let your thoughts turn to the love the Lord has already manifested towards you through his Son, and to the grace he is now ready to bestow on you: and may he bend your hearts into willing submission, and teach you to love his name.

"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Beware of forming too strong an attachment to the perishing things of this world. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world: for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In order to keep alive, and more and more to cherish this noble principle, think much on the wonderful love of God, who remembered you in your low estate, and sent his well-beloved Son to bring you back to himself. Think much, too, of the gracious promises made to those who love God. "He will show mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments."—"All things work together for good to them that love God."—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And think of the blissful state in which you shall have no more occasion to lament the coldness of your spiritual affections, but perfect love shall cast out fear, and you shall serve and enjoy your redeeming God for ever.

The love of God is "the first and great commandment:" but let us also consider, for a few minutes, "the second, which is like unto it, Thou shalt love *thy neighbour as thyself*."

This grace, too, like the foregoing, is a *divinely implanted* principle. There are, indeed, certain kindly feelings and certain acts of charity, to which man is prompted by common humanity, and what may be called natural instinct; but these are essentially different from the affections of the renewed mind, in which alone is to be found that true, pure, and enlightened love, which may be depended on, which is sufficiently comprehensive, and which is acceptable to God. Speaking of men's state by nature, the apostle Paul says, "We ourselves also were at one time foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice



and envy, hateful and hating one another." Selfishness is the chief characteristic of natural men; all of them "seek their own." Their very deeds of charity, which are good in their letter and in their effects, are polluted by the want of a regard to God. But Christian love to man comes in connexion with love to God, and with the new birth. "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."—"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Let it ever be remembered that there can be no separation between true piety and this branch of true morality. Whoever observes the first table of the law, will observe the second also. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Adverting more particularly to the nature of this duty, we observe that loving our neighbour implies that we *entertain benevolent dispositions towards him*. Sincere, inward good-will is the first thing which this spiritual commandment requires. If love exist in this form, it is accepted of God, though a man may not have it in his power to evidence it by his actions: "For if there be first of all a willing mind, a man is accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not." So likewise, if we secretly harbour ill-will to our neighbour, even though it should never break out into action, we are breakers of the law of love, and guilty in the sight of God.

Again, loving our neighbour implies that we *speak well of him*. "Speak not evil one of another," says the apostle James. We should not speak evil of any man without absolute necessity, even though what we say of him be true. This is not sufficiently attended to in the commonly received code of morality. Calumny, be it observed, consists, not only in spreading reports prejudicial to our neighbour which are false, but also in publishing, without just cause, and with an unkind disposition, his real faults. There are times, no doubt, when the whole truth must be spoken out, however much it may be against our neighbour; but the cause of justice and morality is but rarely promoted by speaking, even without malevolent intentions, against others in the common intercourse of life; and in no case are we free of sin if we proclaim their faults with a feeling of gratification. In fact, though it may seem paradoxical, truth

is sometimes the greatest of all calumny. Love tries to conceal reports prejudicial to our neighbour. It imputes his faults, if it can, rather to inadvertence, than to habitual, premeditated wickedness. "Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things."—"Charity covereth a multitude of sins:" and it embraces, with pleasure, the opportunity of publishing whatever may be to the honour or advantage of others. In a word, true love deals faithfully and closely with a man's faults, when it gets him by himself; but as tenderly as possible with them in the presence of others.

To this let it be added, that love to our neighbour implies that we *do him all the good offices in our power*. What avail professions without performance, when it is in our power to perform kind actions? "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" Love requires that, according to our ability, we be "rich in good works, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate."

In connexion, too, with the whole of this, we must remember that true love to our neighbour extends, not only to his temporal, but to his spiritual concerns, and is even more anxious for his salvation than for his outward good, because his eternal interests infinitely transcend his earthly.

Such is the general nature of the love here inculcated. It is subjoined, as an illustration of the manner, and as the standard according to which it should operate, that a man should love his neighbour as he loves himself. Self-love, properly regulated, is lawful, nay, incumbent. Reason and Scripture require that our temporal interest, and the welfare of our bodies, should not be neglected. "No" wise "man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." When, therefore, self-love is condemned, as, for example, when it is said that in the perilous times of the last days, "men shall be lovers of themselves," nothing more is meant than to condemn what we commonly call selfishness, which confines a man's cares to himself, and shuts out the love of God and of his neighbour. There is a proper self-love, a commendable concern for our own interest, which is here laid down as the model and standard of our love to others. Now, how does this proper self-love operate? It leads us to study to preserve our own rights—to be hurt by any unkindness shown to us—not to be soon angry with

ourselves—not to put the worst construction on our own actions—not to publish our own disgrace—to apply to those who can relieve us in the time of distress—to be happy on account of our own success, and to be grieved by our own calamities; and, if we are under the influence of vital religion, our self-love leads us, above every thing, to seek the prosperity of our own souls. In like manner, love to our neighbour should lead us to respect his rights—to treat him kindly—to bear with him—to be tender of his reputation—to help him in his poverty and affliction—and to pray, and do whatever else we can, for his salvation.

Let us consider whether we do indeed love our neighbour in this way. If we are negligent, let us be so no more. If we do, in some measure, attend to the duty, let us seek more and more to be “kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us. Let us be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us.”

To proceed with the history before us:—our Lord commended, as to the letter of it, at least, the answer which the lawyer had given, and said, “*This do, and thou shalt live.*” If any man shall do this perfectly, he shall have a legal claim to life: and whoever shall do this habitually, and from proper motives, though not perfectly, then his obedience, though neither the ground, nor the means, of his justification, will show that he is on the way, and will indeed itself be the way, which leads to heaven.

“*But the lawyer willing,*” that is, wishing, “*to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*” He seems to have vainly felt as if he would have said, with a certain young man, in reference to the commandments, “All these have I kept from my youth up.” He makes no further allusion, however, to the first table of the law, or the love of God; either thinking that he could with more plausibility lay claim to the merit of having kept the second table, or judging himself absolutely perfect in piety to God by his observance of the legal ceremonies. But, with regard to the extent of the duty of benevolence, he put the question, “Who is my neighbour?”—holding himself, probably, the error which was so common among the Jews, namely, that their benevolence was due only to those who were of their own nation, or who had become proselytes. Now, this error was very inexcusable. The precept, in Lev.

xix. 18, runs thus: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord." And, as if it were for the express purpose of preventing the bigoted limitation of the precept, it is added, in the 33d and 34th verses of the same chapter, "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." Still, many of the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, very unscripturally limited the precept in the way we have just stated. The following passages occur in the writings of a very learned Jew:—"An Israelite killing a stranger-inhabitant, he died not for it by the sanhedrim; because it is said, If any one lift up himself against his neighbour. And it is not necessary to say, He does not die upon the account of a Gentile; for they are not esteemed by them for their neighbour."—"The Gentiles, between whom and us there is no war, and so those that are keepers of sheep among the Israelites, and the like—we are not to contrive their death; but if they be in any danger of death, we are not bound to deliver them: for example, if any of them fall into the sea, you shall not need to take him out: for it is said, Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbour: but such a one is not thy neighbour."\* To counteract such uncharitable notions as these, and to meet the question, "Who is my neighbour?" as put by this lawyer, who was desirous of justifying himself, our Lord, "*answering*," or taking up the subject, spoke the parable, as it is commonly considered (though some incline to the opinion that it is a real history), of the good Samaritan.

"*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.*" Jericho was a city in the lot of the tribe of Benjamin, about seven leagues from Jerusalem. A great many priests and Levites resided in Jericho—some say as many as twelve thousand; and, of course, some of them must have been almost constantly travelling to and from Jerusalem, whither they had to go to fulfil their course of service at the temple. There was a desert between these two cities, which, it is said, was much infested with robbers.† The circumstances supposed

\* Quoted by Lightfoot from Maimonides.

† Adamim (Adummim) quondam villula, nunc ruinæ, in sorte tribus Judæ, qui locus usque hodie vocatur Maledomim, et Græce dicitur ἀναβάνης κρυφών, Latine autem appellari potest ascensus ruforum, sive

to have happened, if they be only supposed, are, therefore, probable, and likely to have occurred. The man, who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, must be supposed to have been a Jew himself; and, therefore, even on the narrowest interpretation of the law, was entitled to the sympathy of every Jew. As this Jew was on the way, "*he fell among thieves,*" or rather, robbers, "*who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*" What a proof is it of the exceeding depravity of man, that there have always been highwaymen, who, divesting themselves of every feeling of honesty and humanity, go out like natural beasts of prey, which are made to be taken and destroyed! While the poor man was lying on the road in this wretched plight, "*by chance*"\*—that is, altogether undesignedly on the part of the creature, though every thing of the kind is arranged by the providence of God—"there came down a certain priest that way," who, from his office and profession, might have been expected to have been peculiarly ready to every good work: "*but when he saw him,*" instead of stopping to examine him, and to help him, he immediately averted his eye, and "*passed by on the other side*" of the road. Then another man, who, though not of the family of Aaron, was of the tribe of Levi, "*when he was at the place, came*" (drew near), "*and looked on him;*" and though he could not have been ignorant of the woful state of the poor man, and though there was time for his eye to affect his heart, he was nevertheless steeled against the feelings of compassion, and, like the priest, he too "*passed by on the other side.*" No doubt, each of these unfeeling men had his excuse for this conduct, and said to himself, I have no time; or, I shall be brought to trouble and expense if I meddle; or, I am not called on to interfere: but, as they "forbore to deliver him that was drawn unto death," He that pondereth the hearts would consider it, and mark it against them.† Those who are employed in

rubentium, propter sanguinem qui illic crebro a latronibus funditur. Est autem confinium tribus Judæ et Benjamin descendentibus ab Aelia Hierichum, ubi et castellum militum situm est ob auxilia viatorum.—*Hieronymus De locis Hebraicis.* Thus, the road referred to in this parable was of equally bad reputation in the days of Jerome, who was born about the year 329, as it appears to have been at the time the parable was spoken.

\* *Κατὰ συντυχίαν.* It happened by coincidence of time and other circumstances.

† General and great as is the cruelty which characterizes heathenism, many of the heathens themselves will rise up in judgment against such

sacred offices have been often, like others, unfeeling and unkind; nay, when their minds are blinded by avarice and bigotry, they become the most griping and most persecuting of men: this is a great scandal to the cause they profess to espouse. The true servants of God, however, are of a very different spirit; and many of them have displayed the greatest generosity and self-denial.

At last "*a certain Samaritan*"—one of the people with whom the Jews had no friendly dealings, and whom they utterly despised—"as he journeyed, came where" the wounded Jew "*was*" lying; "*and when he saw him,*" rising above every narrow sentiment, and allowing his sympathy free scope, "*he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine,*" either separately, or rather, beaten up together as an ointment, to cleanse and heal; "*and set him on his own beast,*" as he was unable to walk, "*and*" holding him on," "*brought him to an inn;*"\* and there "*took care of him,*" that he should be refreshed, and properly lodged for the night. We may here notice, in passing, the use and the abuse of inns:—their use, when they are kept only where really needed, and resorted to by travellers, for necessary refreshment and lodging, and by persons who have business to transact which requires some such accommodation; thus, Jacob's sons stopped at an inn, on their way back to Canaan, and Joseph and Mary resorted to the inn, on their arrival at Bethlehem:—their abuse, when they are multiplied solely for the sake of gain and to entrap the unwary, and when they are frequented for idleness and intemperance, as is but too much the case at the present day.

The next morning, when the Samaritan found it necessary to leave the inn, he gave the landlord, for the poor man, "*two pence,*" or two denarii. The Roman *denarius* was about sevenpence half-penny of our money; and, when it is considered how much greater the value of money was in ancient times than now, it must appear that fifteenpence of our money was the full amount of the expense already incurred. Probably, the Samaritan did not carry much money with him, both because less was needed when it was usual

bigotry and cruelty on the part of the professed worshippers of the true God. Herodotus says of the Assyrians, "It is unlawful for them to pass by in silence any person in distress, without first inquiring what is the matter with him." Σιγή δὲ παριζιλεῖν τὸν καμνοντα οὕτω σφί ἐξίστι, πρὶν ἂν ἐπιμενται ἥντινα νοσοῦν ἔχῃ.—Lib. i.

\* *πανδοχεῖον*, a place for receiving all.

for travellers to carry provisions along with them, and also because, having to travel by so dangerous a road, "it would have been imprudent to charge himself with much more money than he was likely to want in his journey."\* But, in departing, he directed the landlord to take all possible care of the wounded stranger, and assured him that whatever additional cost or trouble might be incurred, he would discharge when he came back.

This beautiful account made its way to the conviction of the judgment of the lawyer, in spite of all his pride and prejudice: for when our Lord asked him which of the three, the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan, was "*neighbour*," that is, acted the neighbourly and friendly part to the man who had fallen among the robbers, though the lawyer would not condescend to say expressly, "The Samaritan," he replied to that effect—"He that showed mercy on him." As for the lawyer himself, who thought that he perfectly obeyed the law of love, and merited heaven by his obedience, this parable showed him that, by limiting the precept of love, he entirely misunderstood it, and, therefore, violated it, and was condemned by it.

Not for the benefit, however, of this lawyer only was this parable spoken, but for the benefit of all who should ever read or hear it. Let us also learn from it *the folly of attempting to justify ourselves on the ground of our benevolence*. There are, probably, none of us who have not, at times, felt and exhibited some kindness to our fellow-creatures; but who among us has acted up to the precept of charity, so as never to have broken it? Who has always been so ardent and unlimited in this duty as he ought? who has loved his neighbour as himself? nay, who has not been conscious, at times, of the very opposite sentiments and conduct? Let us all again plead guilty here, and have recourse to God for pardon through his Son. Let us "believe in Jesus Christ, that we may be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

But, if we have improved this parable to humble us, and to lead us to God for salvation by grace, then we are rightly prepared to improve it also as suggesting to us a most beautiful illustration and example of true benevolence. "*Go and do thou likewise*," said Jesus to the scribe; and so he says to each of us. Let us, theoretically and practically,

\* Doddridge.

adopt the extended and noble view of benevolence which this parable opens up. Let us regard every man as our neighbour, and as entitled to our sympathy and assistance, who is in any way brought near to us, and within the reach of our observation or knowledge. Let us not confine our love to a select few, whose ideas and habits are so much our own, that our love to them is only "self-love reflected." Let us never imagine that distinctions of nation or sect, or politics or customs, are to be allowed to shut up our bowels of compassion. Let not even the existence of enmity on the part of any, prove an exception to the rule. In the words of Christ: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." And, when we have adopted this rule in theory, let us be on our guard against the various excuses which, when calls on our compassion actually present themselves, harden us against them, and cause us, as it were, to pass by on the other side. If we cannot meet every demand, let us not fail, in what appears to us to be the most judicious and effectual way, to do our utmost to alleviate the various bodily and spiritual distresses of our fellow-creatures.

As to the illustration which goes on the idea that, in this parable, our Lord intended by the robbed and wounded Jew to represent fallen man, and by the good Samaritan himself—all judicious interpreters justly exclaim against it as erroneous. At the same time, without supposing that this is the primary intention, we may illustrate and enforce this particular duty of benevolence as it is here taught, by the example of Christ, just as we are accustomed to illustrate and enforce many other duties by that example. In a much more pitiable condition than that of this poor man on the highway, lies the sinner who is robbed of his Maker's image and of all good, cruelly wounded by Satan, dead in trespasses and sins, and ready to die eternally: and far more kind than the good Samaritan is Jesus Christ, who, forgetting the enmity the sinner bears to him, has compassion on him, pours into his wounds the balm of his own blood, takes on him the whole expense of his cure, and provides everything necessary for his safety and comfort. While we admire every striking instance of compassion in a fellow-creature, let us far more admire this matchless grace of th



Redeemer. Let us mark how nobly he exemplifies his own precept, and let his love be the pattern of ours.

In conclusion, then, my friends, let us, by all this, be admonished and encouraged to yield our hearts to all the kindliness of Christian sympathy, and our hands to all the activity of Christian charity. If it be still inquired, What is love to our neighbour?—It is love to every human being, flowing from love to God. It is the inward workings, and the external outgoings, of the renewed affections towards man. It is to give to the poor, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and the prisoners, to protect helpless infancy, to bear the burden of the aged, to instruct the ignorant, to warn the careless, to encourage the pious, and to comfort those who mourn. It is to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. In short, it is, in connexion with the glory of God, to live chiefly for the benefit of others. Such is that love which is delightful in its exercise, blessed in its effects, pure, unbounded, heaven-born, everlasting. Love is the greatest of the Christian graces. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Faith is the root, and hope is the blossom; but charity, or love, is the fruit. Faith and hope are like two months in spring, charity is the long-dayed summer. Faith and hope are stars of the morning, charity is the full-blazing sun. Faith and hope fail at last, but "charity never faileth." Faith and hope are two wings, every feather of which sparkles like burnished gold and diamonds—they are the two wings which raise us to heaven; but there we must drop them. Faith and hope are two faithful companions, who guide and comfort us in our way through the wilderness, and who will attend us to the very gates of paradise; but there we shall bid them adieu. Faith will be lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment; but love will enter in with us through the gate into the heavenly city, and continue to engage and bless us throughout the endless ages of eternity. Now therefore, let us studiously cherish this first of graces: and may the Holy Spirit teach us to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbour as ourselves."

## LECTURE LV.

LUKE X. 38-42.

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house. 39. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. 40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. 41. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; 42. But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

It is now proposed, in a dependence on divine strength, to consider the history and the general meaning of this passage; to expand the view which it gives of the salvation of the soul as the one thing needful, and the good part which shall not be taken away; and to conclude with some improvement of the whole.

Let us, in the first place, *consider the history and general meaning of this passage.*

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house." In one of the journeys which our Lord took in the gracious work of his ministry, accompanied by his disciples, he entered into a certain village. We are sure that the village was Bethany, for we read in the beginning of the 11th chapter of John, that Lazarus, who was sick, was "of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." This village was situated fifteen furlongs, or nearly two miles, to the east of Jerusalem. The house into which Jesus was received was called Martha's house, probably because she being the eldest, or perhaps a widow, it was more properly her house than that of Mary or of Lazarus. The Son of God, though the Creator and Lord of all, for our sakes became poor, and condescended to be indebted, if we may so speak, to the benevolence of his own creatures. On this occasion, Martha manifested commendable hospitality in receiving into her house, not only Jesus

himself, but, as we may gather from his usual habits, at least the twelve disciples also, who were now his constant attendants. So Christians in general should, according to their ability, exercise hospitality. If they are ready almost to envy Martha the pleasure and honour of having Christ and his apostles for her guests, let them not neglect to avail themselves of those gracious spiritual visits of which he speaks, when he says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me;" and let them be also disposed to welcome his people for his sake. But there was even danger to these disciples in receiving Jesus into their house, now that he was denounced by the rulers; this pious family, therefore, now manifested a holy boldness worthy of perpetual imitation. Let us never be afraid, or ashamed, to acknowledge Christ and his people.

No sooner had Christ entered into the house, than he began to instruct those who were in it in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God—a lesson to us to study to improve our seasons of social intercourse for our spiritual edification. Martha's sister, Mary, being exceedingly desirous to profit by the opportunity, and to miss nothing of what Jesus was saying, remained close by him: she "*sat at his feet and heard his word.*" According to the usual custom in the East, the teacher seems to have sat on a chair, or elevated seat, while his scholars were seated on the floor, or on mats; in this position, they were lower than he, and might literally be said to sit at his feet. Hence, the expression to have sat at the feet, or to have been brought up at the feet, of any one, signified having been his scholar. Thus, Paul says, in Acts xxii. 3, that he was "brought up" in Jerusalem, "at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers." Whether this attitude was always preserved by the Jewish scholars, or not,\* there can be no doubt that Mary now sat at Jesus'

\* Vitringa (De Synag. lib. i.) produces various authorities from Jewish writers to show that the scholars of the rabbins stood before them, and thence argues that to be brought up at their feet did not express a particular attitude, but, intimated, more generally, the being educated near them, or with them, or under them. He seems to have succeeded in proving that their scholars sometimes stood; but he does not prove that they always stood. There are opposing Jewish authorities in favour of the sitting, or rather, squatting posture: and, whatever, according to the ordinary process of language, may have been the general way of employing the phrase at last, his reasoning is not sufficient to overthrow the commonly received opinion that the origin of the phrase is to be found in the attitude which it literally expresses.—This

feet, as an humble and most attached disciple. Let us imitate her example, in this respect; that is, let us figuratively sit at Christ's feet, by listening to his word with deep composure, close attention, docility, submission, and affection.

*"But Martha was cumbered about much serving."* Being extremely solicitous to furnish a great entertainment for Jesus and those who were with him, she was "cumbered," literally distracted,\*—drawn different ways—perplexed and harassed—having so many things to attend to, that she was at a loss to which to turn first. Now, we must neither go to the extreme of supposing Martha, from any thing that is here said, to have been a careless, or worldly person, nor must we look on her as altogether free of blame on this occasion. We have abundant evidence that Martha was a true believer. When we look to the 11th chapter of John, we find it said that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus:" and we find her giving plain proof of her faith in Jesus, and conducting herself in a manner superior to Mary; for, while Mary sat still in the house, "Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him, and said, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." And when he put the question to her if she believed, she said, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world." After that, Mary also came out, and fell down at Jesus' feet, weeping. In short, on that very trying occasion, while both the sisters conducted themselves well, they discovered a diversity of temper: Martha had much faith and much good feeling, joined with great activity and strength of mind; Mary gave

was the very attitude of Socrates and his disciples, during the hours of instruction, as represented by Plato in his *Phædo*: *Ἐτυχον γὰρ καθήμενοι ἐν δίξῃ αὐτοῦ ἵπαι χαμαιζήλου τινος, ὃ δὲ ἵπαι πολλὰ ὑψηλοτέρου ἢ ἱγν.* As illustrative of this, Buxtorf says that, in giving an advice to any one to become a disciple of their rabbins, the Jews used to say, "Pulveriza te pulvere pedum sapientum—Bedust thyself with the dust of the feet of the wise men." See also Deut. xxiii. 3, and Luke viii. 35.

\* *Περισπαστο.* Epictetus tells the man who is professing to study the improvement of his mind, and yet very much taken up with external things, that he shall neither possess the one nor the other, being distracted, or divided, between both, *Οὐτε τούτο ἔξεις οὐτ' ἱκεῖνα, περισπαστος ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρω.*—Dissert. iv. 10. As the apostle expresses it, 1 Cor. vii. 35, we should "attend upon the Lord without distraction," *ἀπὸ περισπαστου.*

way to feelings which, for a time, quite overpowered her. It is true that if, as is probable, the death and resurrection of Lazarus took place at a later period than the circumstance related in the passage before us, Martha may be supposed to have improved considerably in every Christian grace by that time; yet much that is commendable appears in her conduct on the present occasion. We have already noticed the excellent spirit she manifested in receiving Jesus with his attendants into her house. Now we see the care she took to have every thing in good order; and there can be no doubt that in all the trouble she took, she was influenced chiefly by love and respect to Christ. To a certain extent, then, her conduct here was good, and worthy of imitation. But there was here also something that was culpable; for she was not contented with serving, but was cumbered with serving, and with much serving. She was too ambitious to provide a great feast; in which, if she was not influenced, in some degree, by vanity, she at least mistook or forgot the character of Christ, as if he had been one who would have been gratified by show and luxury. By this conduct, she also deprived herself of reaping benefit from the Saviour's instructions. Surely, less care might have sufficed, especially if, as there is reason to suppose from the respect in which the family was held, she had servants to execute her directions. Besides, she was not contented to be cumbered, and deprived of privileges herself alone, but she desired to have her sister cumbered and deprived also; for she came to Jesus, "*and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her, therefore, that she help me.*" Thus it sometimes happens that those who are much more worldly than Martha was, groundlessly accuse their pious friends of neglecting their temporal affairs. It is quite true that pious persons should give no just cause for any such imputation, but should, on the contrary, be most conscientiously attentive to the business of life, and thus cut off occasion of speaking reproachfully of them. At the same time, it often happens that the dislike of worldly friends and acquaintances to genuine religion causes them to speak of the interference of religious duties with worldly concerns, where there is no interference, and to impute neglect of business where there is no such neglect. What use could there be for Mary also being deprived of this opportunity? Surely it was enough that Martha was absent to take the management of the house. Besides, with all the regard

Martha undoubtedly had for Christ, this was spoken very indiscreetly: it was, in fact, a reflection on him as being careless, and as paying no attention to her comfort. It was something like the conduct of the disciples who came to Christ, and awoke him, during the storm, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Let us beware of the impiety of ascribing forgetfulness, or want of kindness, to him who is ever ready to help us, and who is far more concerned for our welfare than we are ourselves.

This interference brought on Martha her Lord's decided, though gentle, rebuke; for "*he answered and said unto her,*" addressing her kindly, yet solemnly, twice byname, "*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.*" The great variety of preparations she was making, filled her with anxiety, fretted her, and put her out of humour. "*But one thing is needful.*" There are some respectable authorities\* for understanding our Lord as saying that only one dish was necessary. The meaning, however, commonly affixed to the clause, is not only more important in itself, but more directly suggested by the context: for, the "one thing needful," is contrasted with the "many things," not only in number, but in kind, and was what Martha was, for the time, in some degree neglecting for the sake of these many things; and what could that be but the salvation of her soul? And this is exactly the conclusion to which we are led by the sequel, in which our Lord says, "*And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her;*" evidently meaning that Mary was, by her conduct at the time, showing, in a peculiarly striking way, that she had chosen for her part, or portion, spiritual and eternal blessings—in other words, grace and glory, or religion as the means, and heaven as the end. Dr Doddridge thus happily paraphrases these two verses: "And Jesus, in reply, said to her, O Martha, Martha, thou art over anxious, and disturbed with restless agitation of spirit, about many things which are not worth so much solicitude, and might well have been spared on such an occasion as this. But let me tell thee, my dear friend, that there is one thing absolutely necessary, and of infinitely greater importance than any of these domestic and secular cares; even the care to have the soul instructed in the saving knowledge of the way that leads to eternal life, and to secure a title to it; and Mary is wisely attending to that: therefore, instead of reproving her, I must rather

\* Theophylact, Basil, Dr Ad. Clark, &c.

declare, that she has chosen what may eminently be called the good part, which, as it shall not be finally taken away from her, I would not now hinder her from pursuing, but rather invite thee to join with her in her attention to it, though the circumstances of our intended meal should not be so exactly adjusted as thy fond friendship could desire."

Such are the history and the general meaning of this very simple, but very beautiful and instructive occurrence. Let me now, as proposed, in the second place, *expand the view here given of religion, or the salvation of the soul, as the one thing needful, and the good part which shall not be taken away.*

Religion, or attention to the soul's salvation, is here said, first, to be *the one thing needful*. It is one thing. Though consisting of various graces, and pursued in the use of various means, still there is a unity in itself, and a unity in all who embrace it. There is no harmony in those pursuits which relate exclusively to the world. They are constantly jarring; and the prosecution of one favourite object, is almost sure to interfere with another. But as to true religion, all is consistent, and progress in any one grace causes progress in every other. In reference to this, believers are said to be "all one in Christ Jesus;" and Paul says to them, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Further, the care of the soul is not only "one thing," but is *the one thing* by way of eminence; that is, it is, or ought to be, the great business of life; it is a concern in comparison of which all other concerns, however important, are trifling. It is the one thing *needful*—that is, necessary. Various things are, indeed, necessary in a lower sense, and for inferior ends. *Food* and *raiment* are called necessities of life; and, of course, various labours are to be undergone to procure them. There are many things desirable, too, which are not necessary, even in the lower sense, such as riches, honour, and health. But the welfare of the soul must be viewed, by all who form a proper estimate of the real and relative value of things, as necessary in the highest sense of the word—as necessary to their safety and happiness, as necessary beyond comparison, above every thing else. *Riches* are desirable in common estimation, and may be turned to good account, but they

are not necessary to a man's happiness; for the believer, though poor in this world's goods, is "rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom;" and "the law of God's mouth is better to him than thousands of gold and silver." *Honour* is desirable, but not necessary, even in the lower sense; for he who is unjustly despised by men, may be precious, honourable, and beloved in God's sight now, and crowned with glory, honour, and immortality hereafter. Even those things which are called the necessities of life, are by no means necessary in the strongest sense of the word; for, though they are generally given to God's people, some believers have been, for good reasons, destitute of them, and yet were patient, nay, joyful, at the time; and surely, those things are seen by them not to have been necessary, now that they are in glory. Paul said that he had been "in perils" often, "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness;" but he spake of these deprivations with triumph when he was on earth, and now they are all forgotten by him, or remembered only to enhance the blessedness of his eternity. Let certain things be called necessities, if men please, but let them remember that the time is coming when, even in the lowest sense, they shall be necessities no more. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them." The bread of life is necessary in a far higher sense than the bread that perisheth. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," said Christ. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," said Job. *Health* of body is very desirable, as being that without which other merely earthly sources of pleasure are unavailing; but, it is not necessary: for, on the contrary, its deprivation has often proved one of the greatest of blessings to the soul, and while the body has been decaying, the inward man has been renewing day by day, and that spiritual health has been establishing which is a preparation for the country in which the inhabitant shall never say, "I am sick." Nay, highly desirable as is *life* itself, temporal life, it is not necessary to happy existence. Were it so, the possibility of continued happiness would be cut off from men, for very soon they must all die. There is another kind of life, however, which is necessary to happiness—the new life, which is begun on earth, and perfected in heaven. This is the one thing needful. This life of holiness is necessary to our ultimate safety and happiness; for "without holiness no man shall see the



Lord." An interest in Christ by faith, accompanied with the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, is so necessary, that, without it, all other advantages are but of momentary and trifling importance; and with it, all disadvantages are light, and will soon come to an end. Those who have this have all that is necessary; they have enough: they are safe and happy, "by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold they live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

But, the salvation of the soul, or an interest in the blessings of the gospel, is here further described as "*the good part that shall not be taken away.*" It is the "part," that is, the portion, or inheritance, or possession of believers. The Lord said to Aaron, as representing the Levites,\* "Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance." But, in the most important, that is, the spiritual sense, the Levites were the representatives of all true believers, who have God for their portion, and who find in him all that is necessary for time and for eternity. As for all unbelieving and unconverted men, who are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, it may be said of them, as it was of Simon the sorcerer, that they have "neither part nor lot in this matter." The part of Christ's people is indeed a *good* part or portion. Have not they a good part who are "partakers of the heavenly calling"—"partakers of the divine nature," "partakers of God's holiness," "partakers of Christ," "partakers of the Holy Ghost;" and all this as rendering them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Surely, every one of them may say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage." This part, or portion, believers are said to have *chosen*—God having first chosen them, they are enabled to choose him. They voluntarily and heartily fix on him and spiritual blessings as their portion. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever," says the Psalmist, "for they are the rejoicing of my heart."—"I cried unto the Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of

\* Numb. xviii. 20.

the living." And what crowns the excellence of this portion is, that it is *never taken away*\* from those who become possessed of it. Of how short duration, at the very utmost, is the portion of the men of the world who "have their portion in this life!" Frequently, it forsakes them, even during their life-time; at all events, they leave it behind them when they die. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever;" but all is evanescent. Though such a man be made rich, and the glory of his house increased, "when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him" into the grave. Whosoever hath an interest in this good part, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; "but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." When God shall say to the fool—that is, to the ungodly man—"This night thy soul shall be required of thee;" then whose shall those things be which he hath provided? Nor are the people of God any more secure of retaining a worldly portion. They may be stripped of all that in their outward possessions and connexions is naturally desirable; but having chosen the good part, that is, a lasting portion, enables them to rejoice under the heaviest losses. This enables them to say, with Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Of whatever else they may be deprived, they cannot be deprived of this portion. "Your hearts shall rejoice," says Jesus to his own, "and your joy no man taketh from you." And, instead of being losers, they are great gainers by death; for they have treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through to steal: there they have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. It is the language of each of them: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth

\* Hierocles, in his Commentary on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras, says, that if we are possessed of the virtuous habit, it is not in the power of any man, however anxious, to deprive us of it, *Οὐκ ἔστιν ἰσχύς τῇ βουλομένῳ ταύτης ἡμᾶς ἀποσῆσαι*. Cicero says: "If a happy life can be lost it cannot be happy;" and again, "While all other things are uncertain, fading, and movable, virtue alone is fixed with very deep roots, so that she can never by any violence be overthrown, or removed from her place." *Si amitti vita beata potest, beata esse non potest. Quamquam omnia alia incerta sunt, caduca, mobilia, virtus est una altissimis defixa radicibus: quæ nunquam ulla vi labefactari potest, nunquam dimoveri loco.*"—*De Fin.* lib. ii. et *Philip.* iv.

whom I desire beside thee. My heart and flesh shall fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Blessed are the people who are in such a case—blessed are the people whose God is the Lord. Theirs is a good part indeed, for everything needful is, and eternally shall be, theirs. "All things are theirs, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's."\*

And now, in the third place, as to the more express improvement of the subject :

1. This passage suggests important *cautions as to domestic, and all worldly affairs*. Even pious persons are far from being beyond the need of admonition on this point ; nay, some of them stand very much in need of it. The difficulty here is to pursue the proper medium—to pay sufficient attention to these matters, and yet not to carry that attention to an excessive and hurtful length. It would, no doubt, have been wrong to have neglected to make suitable preparation to entertain the Saviour and his attendants on this occasion ; but it seems as if that could have been accomplished by Martha, without her being so cumbered and careful, and troubled about many things ; and it was wrong to propose to deprive her sister of the privilege she so highly valued. On the one hand, then, let all needful attention be paid by the pious mistresses of families to have every thing in their houses in a judicious, orderly, and comfortable state, according to the station of life in which they are placed ; and let them conscientiously avoid all indolent, careless, and slovenly habits, as they would avoid bringing a scandal on their profession, and prejudicing the worldly against it. In describing the virtuous woman, Solomon says, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." On the other hand, this care must not be carried to excess ; it must not be the chief business ; it ought to be managed so as not to interfere with, but to promote, the one thing needful. One breach of duty, in consequence of excessive domestic care, occurs when it is the means of preventing secret and family worship altogether, or of impeding their regular and calm exercise ; and this is very similar to the situation to which Martha now reduced herself. Another sinful error, in this respect, is that of giving or requiring from servants, more time and attention to the preparation of food, and to other family concerns, on the

Lord's-day, than is necessary. Conscientious attention should be paid to this, in order that all may have leisure for religious exercises at home, and that no members of the family may be detained, or absent themselves, from any of the ordinary diets of public worship, without such reason as comes fairly under the designation of necessity or mercy. She is the commendable mistress of a family, who keeps every thing in good order, without depriving herself or household of leisure to use the means of grace; and who shows hospitality without grudging, yet without vanity or extravagance. And he is the commendable man of business, who, while he is "not slothful in business," is, at the same time, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Excessive and hurtful care is by no means confined to household matters: it characterizes many a man in the whole of his occupation, and accompanies him to his farm, or to his merchandise. Let it be held as a bounden duty that every man should pay attention to his own lawful business; for the Psalmist, among other characteristics of "a good man," mentions that "he will guide his affairs with discretion:" but let it also be ever remembered that there is something of still more importance, even the salvation of the soul, and that whatever may be the calls which are made on a man's time and attention, he must not be so cumbered and troubled by them, as to neglect the one thing needful, but must have a mind composed and ready to turn to God, and pursue all earthly objects in subserviency to religion. Let all who have any regard for their souls, practically attend to the following warnings and directions. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."—"Take no thought," no excessive, distrustful, and sinful thought, "saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—"Labour not," that is, comparatively, "for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life."—"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

2. Improve this passage as *a test of your state and character*. Inquire whether you be living as really, and habitually, and practically, feeling that the only thing worth while of living for is the salvation of your souls. Enter into your thoughts, review your lives, and say in what direction has your care chiefly lain? If you are conscious that you are chargeable with gross neglect of the means of salvation, your case is quite clear. But it is not enough to have paid some slight and heartless attention to these means, and to have done some, or even many things according to the letter of the law: all this and more may be true, and yet it may be said, "One thing thou lackest." Ask yourselves, What has had the chief place in your thoughts—the world and its cares, or Christ and his salvation? It is quite possible for you to know this: nay, many of you must know it, and do know it, if you would only confess it, and follow out your conviction. Ask of God what you are chiefly seeking—ask it of the Word of God, ask it of your own consciences. Happy are those of you who, amid all your imperfections, are yet following after salvation as the one thing needful, and have chosen the good part which shall never be taken away from you. Is not each of you ready to say with Jeremiah, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him?" Be admonished to prosecute still more zealously this first of objects, this one thing. Count not yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is to be feared, however, that there are many of you who are not minding the things which belong to your peace: let me, then,

3. Beseech you to *consider the folly, guilt, and danger of neglecting* the one thing needful, and the good portion. Make the supposition as favourable as possible; but, however profitable and gratifying in other respects, your labour may have been, as it has not been directed towards the one thing needful, and the good part, there is no solid, no lasting advantage, or pleasure, in it: "For, what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" You have positively lost your time and your trouble; and, for any good ultimately to result from your toil, you may be said to have been mere idlers. The very

pains you have taken in reference to religion are lost, because you have not been hearty in it. Nay, you are not only losing your time and labour, but you are busied in ruining yourselves for ever. You are adding sin to sin; you are laying plans (strange to tell!) to impoverish yourselves! and you are heaping up mountains of difficulties in the way of your true happiness. How foolish, and how sinful! You are neglecting your souls, from your leading too busy a life. No doubt, some of you have been heard to plead the great press of business, as an excuse for such negligence. But it is no sufficient excuse; it is neither satisfactory to reason now, nor will it be sustained at the bar of God at last. How dangerous, too, such neglect, and such a choice! If you find yourselves at last without the one thing, the only thing needful to your safety, how inevitable must be your ruin! You must at last have one of two portions; if you have not the good part, or portion, you must have the bad. "Upon the wicked God shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup:" they "shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Remember, too, that your disappointment and ruin will be the same, whether you are successful in your worldly schemes or not. It is neither success nor failure as to worldly prosperity, but the mind's bent, that marks the character.

Lastly, Let me earnestly *urge you all to make Mary's choice*. Martha did not neglect this, it is true; but Mary was peculiarly distinguished for it, and therefore, it is usually called Mary's choice. The Lord is now saying to you, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;" he is "setting before you life and death, the blessing and the curse;" see, then, that, in his strength, you choose him for your God and portion, and with him, life and the blessing. Seek after this good part, in the diligent use of the private and public means of grace, especially, in waiting on God in his sanctuary. Say, with David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Seek this good part, too, in the way of the belief of the gospel. Remember that you can obtain it only by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ—only by being justified in his righteousness, and renewed by his Spirit. "If I wash thee not," says he, "thou hast no part with me." By receiving him,

however, you will receive everything else along with him. All other gifts come with the "unspeakable gift." He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for you all, how shall he not with him also freely give you all things? We urge you to this choice by the consideration of its common neglect. It is the many who say, "Who will show us any good?" and the few whose leading wish is that God may lift on them the light of his countenance. Instead of making religion their chief business, most desire as little of it as possible, and are studious to put it out of the way of their every-day employment. Mark their conversation even on the Lord's-day; and is not that demonstrative that they are of the world? Mark how, with the name of Christians, they yet dislike all decision of Christian principle and conduct; and is that not conclusive of their state? Come out from among them, then, and be not conformed to them. We urge you to this choice by the unsatisfactory and transitory nature of all merely earthly good. It remains that all the relations and employments of time be as if they were not, for the fashion of the world passeth away. Will you set your hearts on that which is not? for surely, riches make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven. We urge you to this choice by the noble and enduring nature of the blessings which it brings; for they are indeed large as your wishes, and lasting as eternity. And we urge this choice upon you by the plea of necessity. This is not a matter of indifference; this is not a part which you may choose or refuse, and in either case be safe; but necessity, absolute necessity, lies on you, if you are to have the smallest regard to your interest. Let, then, this necessity prevail with you. Necessity does wonders. Necessity is the mother of invention. Necessity overcomes apparently insurmountable difficulties. But what necessity can at all compare with this—the necessity of escaping from endless misery, and of securing endless happiness? Now, then, let what *must* be done *be* done. Awake, and bestir yourselves! Away, and betake yourselves to the mercy of God through the Redeemer; and begin to live for eternity. May the Lord enable you to make the care of your souls your great concern, and to choose the good part which shall never be taken away from you. If this be attended to, all will be well: if this be neglected, all will be lost.

## LECTURE LVI.

## LUKE XI. 1-4.

“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3. Give us day by day our daily bread. 4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.”

“PRAYER is an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.”\* Prayer is reasonable, incumbent, pleasant, and profitable. This duty comes to us recommended by the example of our Saviour. As God, he was prayed to; but, as man, he prayed to his heavenly Father. We read of him praying at his baptism, in the wilderness, and at his transfiguration; we read of his going out into a mountain to pray, of his being alone praying; and here we read of his “*praying in a certain place,*” most probably along with his disciples. As soon as he had “*ceased,*” for they would not interrupt him during so solemn an exercise, “*one of his disciples*”—who it was we are not told, but one of them, in name of the whole—“*said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray.*” This was, in itself, an excellent prayer; and it is a prayer which we should often adopt. It is a difficult duty to pray well, and we have much need to pray that the Lord would teach us to pray by his Spirit, and from his word. “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” In reference both to the proper spirit, and the proper matter of prayer, it becomes us to say, “Lord, teach us to pray”—“Teach us what we shall say unto thee, for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.”

Though not to the exclusion of the more spiritual view,

\* Shorter Catechism.



the disciples appear to have here chiefly intended to express a desire that Christ would give them some specific directions as to the matter and manner of prayer. We know that John's disciples were peculiarly distinguished for fasting and prayer—that is, probably, frequent prayers; for, we are told by Luke, in the 5th chapter, 33d verse, that Christ's disciples “said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?” We have no particular account, however, of the way in which John proceeded in instructing his disciples in prayer; and, therefore, we are not certain what may have been the exact meaning of the request of Christ's disciples, that he would teach them to pray “as John taught his disciples:” we are not certain whether they wished an exact form of words, or general directions. However this may have been, the instructions he gave embody both a form and a general model. Instead of giving them, however, a form and model entirely new, he gave them very much the same as what he formerly introduced in his sermon on the mount. What we call The Lord's Prayer is thus introduced, in Matthew: “After this manner, therefore, pray ye”—a mode of expression which leads us to think of what follows, rather as a pattern to be imitated in its general substance and manner in all our prayers, than as particular words which we are expressly enjoined to use. But here it is introduced thus: “*When ye pray, say,*” which is an injunction to use the very words. And yet, when we compare the passages in the two evangelists together, we find several variations in the words employed; and, in Luke, the conclusion, or doxology, is omitted altogether: which circumstances seem to leave considerable latitude as to the words.

As to the use which ought now to be made of the Lord's Prayer there seem to be two extremes—the very frequent and unmeaning repetition, and even the constant use of it, on the one hand; and the refusing, or neglecting to use it altogether, on the other. The Romanists are taught to repeat it again and again, as if the efficacy of it depended, in part at least, on the number of times it is repeated, which they have an artificial contrivance for counting and marking.\* Than this it is difficult to conceive a more direct contravention of the chief reason why, according to Matthew, Christ would have his disciples to pray after that manner,

\* The rosary, or string of beads.

namely, that they might not use "vain repetitions."\* Nor is there any good reason for holding that it ought always to be introduced on every occasion of public worship. With those who do so we by no means find fault: but we object to being ourselves constantly bound down even to this scriptural form, and much more to any human forms. Though a form were, every word of it, in the language of Scripture, we think that we ought not to bind ourselves to the use of any one part of Scripture, to the perpetual exclusion of any other part of Scripture. We wish to be left at liberty to employ, in prayer, any part of Scripture which may be appropriate to the sentiment we intend to express. It should be remembered, too, that there are other forms of prayer enjoined in Scripture, besides this: for example (Hos. xiv. 2), "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves" or fruit "of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." We have another

\* Matt. vi. 7: "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." *Μη βαττολογησεντι*, from one Battus, who was remarkable for a verbose and tautological style. Wakefield remarks, that "a frequent repetition of awful and striking words may be the result of earnestness and fervour; but great length of prayer, which will, of course, involve much sameness and idle repetition, naturally creates fatigue and carelessness in the worshipper, and seems to suppose ignorance, or inattention in the Deity—a fault against which our Lord more particularly wishes to secure them." The same author illustrates this point by the following quotation from Terrence:—

"Ohe! jam desine deos, uxor, gratulando obtundere,  
Tuam esse inventam gnatam: nisi illos ex tuo ingenio judicas,  
Ut nil credas intelligere, nisi idem dictum sit centies."

"Now, cease, wife, from stunning the gods with thanksgivings that thy daughter is found; unless thou judgest of them from thy own disposition, and believest that they do not understand any thing, unless it be told a hundred times."—The priests of Baal (1 Kings xviii. 26) "called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us! But there was no voice, nor any that answered." Then Elijah said ironically, "Cry aloud, for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." Dr Adam Clarke furnishes a most striking illustration of the same point, in the following form of prayer used by Tippoo Sahib, which the doctor met with in a book of devotion taken out of his pocket, when he was found among the slain at the storming of Seringapatam; in which book there were several prayers written with his own hand, and signed with his own name. "O God, O God, O God, O God!—O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord!—O living, O immortal, O living, O immortal, O living, O immortal, O living, O immortal!—O Creator of the heavens and the earth!—O thou who art endowed with majesty and authority, O wonderful," &c.

example in Joel ii. 17: "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is thy God?"

This prayer was peculiarly well suited to the disciples at the time when the kingdom of God was about to be introduced by the establishment of Christianity, and when they had not yet begun to pray in the name of Christ: in fact, some of the petitions were in previous use among the Jews. It is quite consistent, however, with its being an absolutely perfect form at the time it was given, to say that we now desire something additional, namely, an express reference to the work and name of Christ. Our Lord said to his disciples,\* "Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." It is unfavourable to the opinion of those who argue for the absolute incumbency of introducing its very words into all, or almost all, our devotional exercises, that, though there are various prayers recorded, which were put up by the disciples after our Lord's ascension, there is no mention of this particular prayer, nor indeed, any historical proof of the formal use, in Christian worship, of this, or any prayer, till the third century. Justin Martyr, who suffered martyrdom in the year of our Lord 167, says, that in the primitive Churches, "The president offered up prayers according to his ability:" and Tertullian says, "We pray without a monitor, because we pray from the heart."† At the same time, with regard to the Lord's Prayer, all the clauses admit of a meaning which is quite suitable to these latter days of the Church; and, while it ought always to be regarded as a model of prayer, in respect of matter, simplicity, and actual petition, we are bound, while we intentionally avoid all unreasonable repetition of it, and still more all superstitious use of it, as if it were to operate like a charm—we are bound occasionally to employ, in whole, or in part, its very words.‡

\* John xvi. 23.

† *Sine monitore, quia de pectore oramus.*

‡ The Directory of the Church of Scotland does not enjoin the constant use of this (or of any other particular part of Scripture), in worship; but it recommends its occasional use, and the Lord's Prayer is fully explained in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Accordingly, it is occasionally introduced, but not as a matter of course, in our public worship; and it must be supposed to be well understood by those who

Let us now proceed to such an exposition of the prayer itself as can be given in one discourse. The first part of the Lord's Prayer is the *preface*, which is in these words: "*Our Father who art in heaven.*" Among the various titles of God, that of our Father, is, perhaps, the most instructive, solemn, and endearing. He is the Father of us all by creation. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves."—"He is the Father of our spirits," and "the former of our bodies."—"Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" In this address, then, we glorify him as our creator. He is also the Father of us all, in respect of his providence. As an earthly father is supposed to protect and provide for his children, so the Lord, whatever may be our state and character, preserves and provides for us: and, in this view, we also acknowledge him in this address. But neither as our creator, nor as our preserver, can we approach him aright, unless, as his children by regeneration and adoption, we come to him as our reconciled Father through Jesus Christ. We are not naturally his spiritual children; we are not his children in any endearing sense, or in dutiful feelings, nor is he our Father, as taking any complacency in us: on the contrary, we are the children of the wicked one, and God is angry with us every day. But those who are reconciled to him by faith in his Son's atonement, and born again and renewed after his image, and adopted by grace into his family, become his children indeed, and are treated by him with much greater kindness than the word "father" can express when applied to man. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He provides for them all things needful, not only for life, but for godliness. He loves them. He defends them. He allows them free access into his presence, to make known all their feelings. He chastises them when needful. He constitutes them heirs with God, and joint heirs with Christ. On each of these ideas much might be said, but we must be contented with merely stating them.

What a foolish and sinful part do you act who refuse to acknowledge this gracious Father, as your Father! "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then, I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you."—"Do

belong to our communion. All these remarks are made, merely to explain our views on this subject, and by no means with the wish to attack those of others.

ye thus requite the Lord? O foolish people and unwise! is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?" Return, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight:" and he will receive you and bless you.

On the other hand, what a blessed privilege is yours who, in the saving sense, have God for your Father! What manner of love he hath bestowed on you, that you should be called his children! Avail yourselves of the privilege; and see that you conduct yourselves towards him with all dutiful affection. It is, however, chiefly in reference to the sentiments with which you should approach him in prayer, that this most interesting title of Father is here to be considered: and, in this view, it teaches you to approach him "with all holy reverence and confidence." The title forbids all indecent familiarity, and yet invites all filial boldness. It reminds you at once of your complete dependence on him, and of your endearing relation to him. You do him injustice, if you doubt of his gracious disposition towards you, or of his readiness to hear you. This very comparison is employed by our Lord in a subsequent part of this chapter, to remove your suspicion, and to encourage you, not only to pray to God, but to pray in the belief that you will be heard. You see, then, to what a glorious privilege you are called, in being called to pray to God as your Father. Endeavour to approach him in that character; and, sensible of the difficulty of doing so, nay, of your own complete insufficiency to do so, let it be one of your most earnest requests that you may be delivered from the spirit of bondage and of fear, and may receive "the spirit of adoption, whereby you may cry, Abba. Father."

The expression is "*Our* Father;" and the pronoun, being in the plural number, reminds us to use social prayer—"to pray with and for others." Social prayer, in general, and especially this mode of praying to God as our common Father, is finely calculated to cherish mutual Christian love. Social prayer, moreover, has a particular promise of a gracious answer. Our Lord said to his disciples, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

God is here styled our Father "*who is in heaven.*" When he is called our Father in heaven, or heavenly Father, this

distinguishes him from our earthly fathers, and obviates all grovelling ideas of him. It is true that he is everywhere present—"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord:" yet there is a difference; on earth he is invisible, in heaven he is visible; on earth his glory is only seen reflected from his works, in heaven his glory is seen directly; heaven is his throne, while the earth is his footstool. This shows that he is able to help us, and also that we should approach him reverently, though confidently. "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few."

After the preface comes the first of the six petitions, "*Hallowed be thy name.*" God's name is put for his designation, or his glory, or himself; and, in the enlarged sense, it includes his "names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works." Let thy name be "hallowed"—sanctified, considered as holy and glorious. To hallow God's name is to have right thoughts, reverential expressions, and righteous actions with regard to it. How contrary to this petition are profane swearing, and also the various light and thoughtless ways of speaking of God and divine things in common conversation, and even in exercises that are considered to be religious! Well is he entitled to the most reverential regard, of whom it is said, "Holy and reverend is his name." This may be considered both as an act of adoration, and as a petition. Viewing it in the former light, we ourselves should magnify the Lord in pronouncing it; and viewing it in the latter, we should feel an earnest desire that he would enable us and others to magnify him. In putting up this petition, we are asking what God is sure to grant. When Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify thy name; then there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The second petition is, "*Thy kingdom come.*" May the kingdom, or reign, of God come. God's right to reign is universal; nay, in respect of providential government, "his kingdom" actually "ruleth over all." But, in respect of willing and dutiful submission, it is far otherwise: for men have rebelled against him, and have said that they will not have him to rule over them. In order to restore them to

obedience and happiness, he has appointed the various means of grace: especially, he has committed the task of regaining them to his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, whose kingdom is a gracious kingdom—a reign over the hearts and lives of his people, consisting in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is known that when the Jews, in ancient times, prayed for the coming of the kingdom of God, they had a particular view to the coming of Messiah. He was indeed come, and his kingdom was in some degree, come, at the time our Lord directed his disciples to put up this petition; but little, comparatively, was yet accomplished, in the actual establishment of his reign over sinners of mankind. The disciples were, therefore, to make its success an object of special prayer. And, though the Spirit was poured down in rich effusion at Pentecost, and many have been brought in, yet this kingdom is far from having attained that universality to which it is destined. There is given unto the Son of man “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him.” To pray that God’s kingdom may come, is now to pray that the gospel may be universally published and received; it is to pray that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; it is to pray “that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.” Let us consider what is necessary for us to do, to show that we are in earnest in putting up this petition. It is necessary that we become the subjects of this kingdom ourselves. We cannot really wish the prosperity of a kingdom with which we are at variance. If every one who hears the gospel of the kingdom would be careful to embrace it for himself, the number of its subjects would rapidly increase. And if we are earnest in putting up this petition, we shall not only pray, but do everything in our power, for the promotion of religion in the world. We shall study to forward it by a holy life, letting “our light so shine before men that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven.” We shall exert ourselves with our own connexions, and in our own neighbourhood. And we shall, according to our ability, contribute of our substance to the support of plans for the propagation of Christianity in heathen and other unenlightened lands. It would be absurd for a man who was able to work, to content himself with praying for his daily bread,

and lie by in idleness; equally absurd it is for men to pray that the kingdom of God may come, and to take no steps for its establishment. Let us, then, as this petition reminds us, begin with the cordial submission of our own hearts to the reign of God; and then take a sincere, lively, and active interest in the salvation of our fellow-men.

The third petition is, "*Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*" The *preceptive* will of God, which seems here chiefly intended, is done, perfectly done, in heaven. As for the glorified saints, "they serve him day and night in his temple." As for the holy angels, the Psalmist says, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." It is true we cannot attain to their perfection: but perfection should be our aim; and our obedience must be like theirs, in respect of cheerfulness and universality. For ourselves, let us remember the absolute necessity of our being brought to do the will of God here, if we would do it at last in heaven. "Not every one who saith unto me, Lord, Lord," says Christ, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven." His preceptive will is revealed to us in his Word, and that will we should study to know and obey. We here also pray that the *purposing* and *providential* will of God may be done. He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: such is the fact; and by presenting this petition, we express our cordial acquiescence in that fact. There is, indeed, one branch of this duty, in which the inhabitants of heaven cannot set us an example, namely, patient submission to painful dispensations of God's providential will; and yet their earthly history was troubled, for it was "through much tribulation that they entered into the kingdom of God." Whether it is painful, or pleasant, let us ever say, "The will of the Lord be done." As for others, this is a petition that the will of God may be done by them universally. If we thus pray aright, the sight of sin in others will be very distressing to us—when we behold transgressors we shall be grieved: and, on the other hand, we shall rejoice greatly when we see any walking in the truth. But especially, let us be careful that we do the will of God ourselves. "This is the will of God, that we believe on him whom he hath sent;" and "this is the will of God, even our sanctification." Let it be our constant study and earnest prayer, that we may



thus do his will. "May the God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."

The fourth petition is, "*Give us day by day our daily bread.*" It has often been remarked that the very order in which these petitions are introduced should teach us to give the first and chief place, in our desires, to those things which more immediately relate to the glory of God, and, in connexion with that, to our spiritual welfare. On the subject of the order of the petitions, a pious author\* remarks as follows: "It is known to be the ordinary course of skilful orators, to place the meanest part of their speech in the middle; and in this, let the ear of any understanding mind be judge, whether it sounds not much better that this request pass in the middle, than if the prayer should have ended with it. Whereas now it begins spiritually, and closes so. How few are there that follow Christ's estimate in this, that have the very strength of their desires, and most of their thoughts, on things that are spiritual, and do but in passing lend a word to the things of this life!" We should "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Nevertheless, as we have bodies as well as souls, and as there are various promises made to us of a temporal nature, the state of our bodies, and of our temporal affairs, should be attended to, and have its own place and own proportion, in our prayers. It is only *bread* that we are here taught to ask. As bread, however, is one of the things which are needful for the body, we may consider this petition as including all the necessities of life, leaving it to God to determine what is necessary, according to the circumstances in which we are placed. We are here evidently discouraged from asking superfluities and wealth. If these come, we should be thankful for them, and careful to use them to God's glory; but we are not to pray for them: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not."—"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out:" therefore, "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." When we ask what is necessary, as our "bread," we are reminded that we should ask it, not as the "bread of deceit," or the "bread of idle-

\* Leighton.

ness," but in the way of honest industry, of righteousness, and of diligence. And we are also reminded that, even in the way of diligence, we are still to look to God, and not to ourselves, for what we need: we are to pray that he would *give* it, freely give it. As in spiritual, so in temporal things: whoever may plant, and water, or labour in any way, it is God who giveth the increase. He can easily disappoint all our endeavours; and when we succeed, we should remember to whom we are indebted. And as it is only bread, or what is necessary, we are to ask, so we are not warranted to ask even that in such abundance at once as would secure us ever after, or even for any great length of time, and render it needless for us to pray for it any more; but our prayer must be, "Give us day by day our daily bread"—that is, we are to be every day asking what is sufficient for that day;\* and we are as well to pass a day without food, as a day without prayer. As the Israelites of old received the manna from heaven fresh every day, so we must receive our necessities in a similar way; that is, we must see them constantly coming from God; else we are living without God, and can have no blessing with what his disregarded bounty may send. And though it is plainly literal bread to which this petition directly refers, yet, as "man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," it is proper, in pronouncing these words, to desire that the Lord would bestow on us the bread of life, or needful supplies of grace for our souls. In this spiritual sense, as well as in the literal (and here indeed it is even more directly and sensibly felt than in the literal), we must remember, that no store of

\* Τον ἄρτον ἡμῶν τον ἰπιουσιον διδου ἡμιν το καθ' ἡμεραν. There has been considerable diversity of opinion as to the precise meaning of the word ἰπιουσιον. As the idea of "daily" is fully expressed by the phrase καθ' ἡμεραν, it seems probable that the word ἰπιουσιον is intended to express something different. The idea that this is a petition for the bread of "to-morrow," though adopted by Lightfoot, is surely untenable and paradoxical. Origen says that the word ἰπιουσιος seems to have been formed by the evangelists; as it does not occur in any of the earlier Greek writers—ἰοικι πικπλασθαι ὑπο των εὐαγγελιστων: he renders the word, however, ἰφημερον, "daily;" as does also Chrysostom. I adhere to the opinion of those who think the word is intended to signify "sufficient," or, sufficient for subsistence: quasi ἰπι οὐσιαν. As περιουσιος signifies abundant, ἰπιουσιος seems to signify sufficient. This explanation of the word is given by Theophylact: Ἄρτος ἰπι τη οὐσίᾳ καὶ συστάει ἡμῶν αὐταρκη, "bread sufficient for our subsistence, and sustenance."

grace can be treasured up by us from which we may draw independently on God, and that we must live as the daily and constant pensioners on his spiritual bounty. Whenever the actual communication of his influences is restrained, that moment all that is truly gracious in our affections and conduct ceases. Let us endeavour, then, to preserve a constant dependence on divine providence and grace, and daily say, "Give us day by day our daily bread."

The fifth petition is, "*And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*" We have here what is, strictly speaking, the petition itself, and then an explanatory clause subjoined. The petition itself is, "Forgive us our sins." Now, this petition implies, both a conviction and an acknowledgment of our sinfulness: it is, in fact, if properly offered up, a penitential confession of our sins. Then, it is more expressly an earnest prayer for forgiveness, for deliverance from the guilt and punishment of our sins, and for the restoration of our Father's complacency whom we have offended. It is altogether erroneous to say that believers have no need to pray for forgiveness; to say this is directly to oppose the authority of Christ himself, who here teaches his own disciples so to pray. It is true that all believers—all who have passed from a state of condemnation to a state of justification, in which God pardons all their sins, and accepts them as righteous in his sight—are safe for ever; it is true that the Lord will never utterly cast any of them off: but, as they are still liable (though regenerated and sanctified) to fall into sin, so they are still in need of forgiveness, such forgiveness as a beloved and, on the whole, a dutiful son needs, when he has done anything to displease his earthly father. Remission of sins cannot possibly, in the strict sense, extend but to sins that are past;\* but, it is a provision of the well-ordered covenant, that remission of a believer's sins that are past secures the remission of his sins that are to come, by securing his subsequent penitential and believing return to his Father for such remission. Hence, believers, in the consciousness of their remaining sins, whether more or less heinous, should always pray, "Forgive us our sins."

The explanatory and qualifying clause to this petition is, "*For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*" No person who knows any thing of the way of pardon opened up in Scripture, will ever suppose that this clause teaches

\* Rom. iii. 25.

that our forgiving others is the reason why God forgives us. The moving cause of our forgiveness is God's free grace; the procuring, or meritorious cause, is the righteousness of Christ; and the instrumental cause, or means, of our obtaining forgiveness through Christ, is faith alone. This is the doctrine clearly taught, where the subject is expressly handled; and no occasional phrase, rightly interpreted, is contrary to it. This is not a plea of merit; but it is a description, in part, of the disposition of all who are forgiven, and who come anew seeking forgiveness, for they are themselves of a forgiving disposition.\* According to Matthew, the petition runs thus: "Forgive us our debts, *as* we forgive our debtors:" or, we ask forgiveness, according to the manner, and measure, in which we forgive others, and which should be freely, fully, and for ever. Not that we are bound to pass from all pecuniary debts; that would be quite an overstretching of the meaning, though even these we must not exact in any way which is rigorous, or inhumane: but debts in the figurative sense, or injuries, we ought readily and heartily to forgive all men. Our Lord follows up this prayer, in Matthew, with the following words, farther enforcing the same idea: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."† Let us be conscientious, then, in forgiving, as we hope to be forgiven. What a motive to forgiveness does this clause suggest, when, every time we repeat it, without having forgiven those who have injured us, we virtually pray that we ourselves may not be forgiven by God! The following explanation of this petition is truly excellent, considering it as the prayer of believers—"We pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because, by his grace, we are enabled from the heart to forgive others."

The sixth and last petition is, "*And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*" Temptations are of two kinds—enticements to sin and trials. In the former sense of enticing to sin, God never tempts; and to say that he does, would be the blasphemy of representing him as the author of sin. In the language of James: "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God

\* The *καὶ γὰρ* is not causal, but explanatory.

† See also the parable of the unmerciful servant, Matt. xviii. 23.

cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.\* Temptations, in this sense, come from a man's own heart, from the world, and from Satan. In the other sense, however, the sense of trials, temptations may be considered as sent by God. Thus God "tempted," or tried Abraham, in commanding him to offer up his son Isaac. No doubt, trials are often blessed to God's people; they are blessed, when rightly borne and improved. The apostle James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." But, when we consider our own great weakness, it would be wrong for us to ask that we should be subjected to any very severe trials; nay, we feel inclined to ask, and we are here encouraged to ask, that God either would not subject us to such as might endanger our stability, or, if he should, that he would support us under them. Now, we have this pleasing declaration,† "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." This pleasing declaration applies, both to what we commonly call trials, and to the enticements of Satan.

This petition also teaches us to say: "*But deliver us from evil.*" This might have been still more exactly rendered, "deliver," or rescue us from "the evil one;" that is, from Satan: so the very same word is rendered in several other places.‡ In this sense, we pray that we may be preserved from the snares and assaults of the devil, who seeks to destroy us. Or, taking the sense of evil in general, we pray that we may be delivered from all real evil—from the evil of error, and sin, and the world, and final apostasy, and eternal ruin. In this, we are praying along with Christ himself, who, in his intercessory prayer for his followers, says: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the

\* In respect to what is sinful, God is sometimes said to do what he only permits to be done, and does not positively interfere to prevent; and, though he never tempts men to sin, he may permit them to be tempted to it: hence the suitableness of this petition, in this particular view. Quod igitur dicimus Deo, Ne nos inferas in tentationem, quid dicimus, nisi Ne nos inferri sinas?—"When we say to God, Lead us not into temptation, what do we say but, Suffer us not to be led?"—*Augustine, De Bono Perseverantiæ, cap. vi.*

† 1 Cor. x. 13.

‡ Matt. xiii. 19, 38; 1 John ii. 13, 14, iii. 12, v. 18.

world; but, that thou shouldest keep them from the evil;" that is, from the evil one, and from all real evil.

If we present this petition aright, we must do so in the recollection of our exposed condition, in an humble sense of our own weakness, and in a conviction of God's ability and willingness to keep us from falling. And all these feelings should lead us to avoid, as much as possible, all dangerous and tempting situations, and all incentives to sin, and, when we are unavoidably exposed to temptation, to use all means in our power to overcome it. "Watch and pray," says our Lord, "that ye enter not into temptation." If we attend to these rules, we may expect that the Lord "will deliver us from every evil work, and preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom."

The conclusion, or doxology, which we find in Matthew, is entirely omitted in Luke. It is an ascription of praise to God, somewhat similar to that in 1 Chron. xxix. 11: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for, all that is in the heaven and the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all." The conclusion, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever," is not only a sublime act of adoration, but an encouragement to prayer, inasmuch as God's being possessed of the kingdom, and of all power, is a proof that he is the proper object of prayer, and able to grant what we ask.

The word, "*Amen*," with which this, like almost every other prayer, concludes, signifies both verily, and so be it. In the sense of verily, it signifies that we assent to the truth of all that has been said;—and in the sense of so be it, it signifies an earnest wish that the whole prayer may be granted. From the use of this word at the close of prayers, the apostle draws an argument to prove that all public religious services should be carried on in a language understood by the people who are present, and, of course, condemns the use of the Lord's Prayer, or any other prayer, in the Latin language, where that language is not the common language of the people.\* "When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say, Amen, at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" Think well, my friends, of the vast and solemn import of this single word, Amen, when it

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

comes to be pronounced at the end of our prayers. In this one word, you, as it were, pray the whole prayer over again, however long it may have been. And when you consider the importance of the subjects introduced into a scriptural prayer, and the unspeakable value of the deliverances and of the blessings implored, what an emphasis of feeling should you throw into this word, whether pronounced audibly, or breathed inwardly to yourselves !

Such is that admirable form and model of prayer, which our Lord has prescribed, for our occasional use, and constant imitation. How comprehensive, and yet how compendious ! There are several things which might now be very appropriately added, but the subsequent verses, if God give us an opportunity of considering them, will again bring the same subject of prayer before us. In the meantime, may the Lord bless what has been said ; and to his name be praise. Amen.

## LECTURE LVII.

## LUKE XI. 5-13.

“ And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. 11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12. Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

HAVING, in the foregoing part of the chapter, furnished the disciples, at their own request, with a form and model of prayer, our Lord proceeds, in the verses now read, to urge them to *persevering importunity* in prayer. Of these nine verses, the first four are peculiar to Luke, and the last five are nearly the same with a part of the sermon on the mount, as given by Matthew. The first four verses contain a supposition of circumstances which might occur in any part of the world, but which are more likely to occur in the East; for, in hot climates, it is not unusual, when it can be done with safety, to travel in the cool of the night.\* In the case before us, a traveller, wearied with his journey, and standing in need of refreshment, is supposed to arrive unexpectedly, and at midnight, at the house of a friend, who, having no provisions, is quite unprepared to entertain him. He who is thus visited, is then supposed to go out to apply to a neighbouring friend for the loan of some provisions. In such a case, it is likely enough, as here supposed, that he who, with his family, was thus disturbed in his repose by

\* Scott.



so untimely a visit, would endeavour to put off his friend with a variety of excuses: but, if his friend should persevere in pleading with him, he would be at last prevailed on, and would yield, though it were only to get rid of his importunity.\* All this is here so naturally and plainly stated, as not to require any explanation. Let us proceed, then, without further remark, to the practical application of the supposition.

Besides the leading lesson here taught, to which we shall soon more particularly advert, there are several other things taught, more or less directly. We are taught the duty of hospitality, and that not grudgingly, or of necessity, but cheerfully shown: and we are taught, in connexion with this, the duty of friendly and neighbourly accommodation. And then, as this is a parable, in which spiritual things are shadowed forth, under a comparison drawn from common life, we are reminded that we ourselves are destitute of all temporal and spiritual good, and should apply to God for whatever we need, either for body, or for soul. We are especially taught to apply to him for "loaves"—for bread, for the necessities of life; and for supplies of grace—for the bread of life that cometh down from heaven, for the bread that endureth unto life everlasting. We are taught to go to God with confidence, as to a friend who knows and loves, and is inclined to help us. We are taught to apply to him for others, as well as for ourselves; for this man came for his friend, and not for himself. "Pray one for another," saith the apostle James. We surely come to God on a good errand, when we come to him for the means of enabling us to do good to others, and to entertain and edify those that come to us.† We are here taught, also, to apply to God in the time of difficulty and straits. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." But the chief lesson here read to us, is a lesson of importunity; that is, of earnestness and perseverance in prayer. It is necessary, indeed, to beware of running the parallel too

\* Martial's Epigram, lib. iv. 15, though much surpassed by this parable in variety and beauty of imagery, cannot fail to interest the classical scholar:—

Mille tibi nummos hesternæ nocti roganti  
In sex aut septem, Cœciliæ, dies,  
Non habeo, dixi; sed tu causatus amici  
Adventum, lancem paucaeque vasa rogas,  
Stultus es an stultum me credis, amice? negavi  
Mille tibi nummos, millia quinque dabo?

† Henry.

close; we must be contented with the outline of the meaning, and not imagine that anything of the infirmity and indisposition to help, which appeared in one of these men, is to be found in God. But then, this difference only renders still more obvious the delightful conclusion to which the parable is intended to lead: for, if importunity proves so effectual with men, notwithstanding all their selfish indolence, how much more will it prevail with God, whose benevolence is so vast to prompt his aid, and whose energy is so powerful to impart actual help with the utmost ease! "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The Lord, instead of being offended, is pleased with our importunity; he is more ready to hear than we are to speak, and to give than we are to ask. That he sometimes delays to answer is only a particular illustration of his love; he only waits till he can answer in the best possible way, and at the best possible time. However, from these delays arises, in part, the need of persevering importunity. Intending to press this point more fully on your consideration in a subsequent part of this exercise, let us proceed to offer a few remarks on the remaining five verses, in which, as formerly, in the sermon on the mount, our Lord follows up the same subject in the way of express commands and encouraging promises.

*"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."* In this passage, asking, seeking, and knocking, just stand for praying: but the words have a strong sense, and seem to increase in intensity of meaning. "Ask," as a beggar asks for alms; or, as one petitions for some great favour. "Seek," as one seeks for something valuable that has been lost; or, as a merchantman seeketh goodly pearls. This implies that we should add to our petitions our endeavours in the use of the appointed means. "Knock," as one that desires admission into a house. Sin has, as it were, shut against us the door of admittance into God's favour and presence, and we are called on to pray, and to pray earnestly, that he would graciously open that door to us, in order that we may escape from our exposed and wretched condition, and enter

into a state of safety and happiness. And you observe that there is an express promise made to those who thus pray, that they shall have a favourable answer: and there is also a declaration that, in point of fact, such is the experience of praying persons. To the more full illustration of these two connected points we shall return by-and-by. It only remains, in explanation, to notice the illustration of the same subject by a comparison drawn from the readiness which earthly parents show to give their children what they ask.

*"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, will he, for a fish, give him a serpent? or, if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?"* Some stones are not unlike bread; a serpent is not unlike some kinds of fishes—for example, those of the eel species; and the body of a large scorpion is not unlike an egg;\* but would any father, who is possessed of the common feelings of humanity, mock his son's hunger with a stone, or endanger his life with venomous reptiles? Surely not. A father will neither altogether refuse the request of his famishing son, nor give him what is useless or hurtful: on the contrary, he will listen to his application, and bestow on him what his case requires. But observe the conclusion which our Lord draws from this: *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"* In the parallel passage, Matt. vii. 11, the expression is, *"How much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"* These good things are here summed up in the gift of the Holy Spirit; for, those who have received the Spirit, have received Christ and every thing necessary for their spiritual good here, and also the earnest of eternal life hereafter.

\* Scorpions are large insects, of which there are several different species, varying from an inch and a half, to six inches or more in length, and of various colours; most being dark, but one species white. Their sting causes a very painful inflammation, and is often dangerous, and sometimes even fatal. Their appearance is somewhat like that of the lobster; and the shape of their bodies has some resemblance to that of an egg.—*Buffon and Bochart*. We have the following figurative description of the miseries to be inflicted by certain cruel people, in the 9th chapter of the Revelation: *"Unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power."*—"And to them it was given that they should not kill men, but that they should be tormented (by them) five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when it striketh a man."—"And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails."

Let us remember, my friends, how entirely dependent we are on the influences of the Holy Spirit for the actual application of the benefits of the Saviour's purchase—for light, faith, peace, holiness, comfort, stability, and every grace. Let us be mindful, too, how we are to expect these influences, namely, in answer to prayer. The gift of the Spirit is promised in the covenant of grace. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." But this promise is only made to those who plead it in prayer; for it is added,\* "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." And, in proof that God will bestow this inestimable gift on those who ask it, an appeal is here made to the common experience of children as such, and to the feelings and practice of earthly parents as such. Let children say if they have not, generally speaking, found their parents ready, to the utmost of their ability, to promote their happiness and comply with their reasonable desires, and even ready to deny themselves in many respects, in order that *they* might not feel any want. And let parents think of their deep feelings of compassion for their children, and their active and cheerful exertions for their happiness; and thence, let both learn somewhat of the force of the argument involved in the comparison which our Lord here draws, when he speaks of the great God as our Father, and of us as his children. But the comparison does not nearly come up to the truth, as Jesus himself declares. Parents are "evil;" earthly parents, even the wisest and best of them, are imperfect, weak, and sinful creatures; but our heavenly Father, he who made, who preserves, and who has redeemed us, is perfectly wise, holy, and powerful, and also infinitely compassionate. If, then, earthly parents, who are in many respects so ignorant, and so weak, and so sinful, have yet knowledge, and power, and feeling enough to give good gifts to their children; how much more shall our heavenly Father, who is infinitely wise, powerful, and kind, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

And now, let us take up the leading topic in these nine verses, and direct your attention more fully to that particular characteristic of the duty of prayer, which, from the word used in the 8th verse, is commonly called *importunity*. This one word includes the two ideas of earnestness

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 37.

and perseverance, being equivalent to what the apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans,\* calls "continuing instant in prayer."

Consider here, first of all, *the reasonableness and incumbency* of such importunity. With regard to the earnestness which is implied in importunity of prayer, it is difficult to conceive how any objection to this can be raised on the ground of reason; for, it is plain, that not only the prayer which is altogether insincere, and proceeding out of feigned lips—the prayer of the hypocrite—but also the prayer which is not the expression of an actual wish, nay, of some considerable degree of intensity of desire, is but a mocking of God, and must be an abomination to him. With regard, however, to the perseverance which is implied in importunity, the unenlightened mind has sometimes suggested that it is enough to address a request once to the Almighty; because, if he be inclined to grant it, one intimation of the wish is as well understood by him as a thousand, and we are not to imagine that he will be driven from his purpose by human importunity. Now, it is true that God's ear is not heavy that it cannot readily hear; it is true that we are not to be heard for our much speaking; and it is also true that God is of one mind, and none can turn him. It is even true that there are cases in which further perseverance in prayer is not a duty, but should be desisted from. These are cases in which men are applying for any temporal thing of which there is no express promise in Scripture. There are various things of this kind which we may lawfully desire, and express our desire for in prayer, in as far as it shall serve for God's glory, and our own spiritual good. But when, in any such case, Providence appears plainly to have ordered the matter otherwise than we wish, and to have so settled the point that we could not have our desire but by a miracle—in short, when we have in any way discovered what ought to be sufficient to convince us that it is not the will of God to grant what we are asking, to persevere in praying for it after that would not be holy and warrantable importunity, but unauthorized and troublesome obstinacy. In such a case, we ought to learn from that of Moses, to whom, when he attempted to prevail with God to allow him to pass over Jordan, after he had been told that he was to die in the wilderness, God said, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter." At the same time,

\* Rom. xii. 12.

in many cases which are chiefly of a temporal nature, where God's will is not plainly made known by circumstances, perseverance in prayer is both reasonable and useful. But with regard to spiritual blessings—those blessings which are connected with salvation, which are absolutely necessary to our happiness, which are expressly promised to those who ask them, and which are more immediately referred to in this passage as included in the gift of the Holy Spirit—the reasonableness and propriety, nay, the absolute incumbency, of this earnest perseverance, this importunity, are very certain.

The reasonableness and incumbency of importunity in prayer appear from *the majesty and holiness of that Being whom we address, contrasted with our own weakness and sinfulness*. The depth of feeling and anxiety for success with which we approach to ask a favour of a fellow-creature, bear a proportion to his dignity and worth: what reverence, then, what fervour, what earnestness and perseverance of supplication, become us in drawing near to the King of kings, and Lord of lords! An indifferent, lukewarm, and careless spirit and demeanour, in approaching this august Being, are most sinful and offensive. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot," says he to every such careless worshipper; "so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And when we bring into comparison with his glory and holiness our own meanness and unworthiness, the inference is still strengthened. Abraham felt this sense of his own unworthiness urging him to holy importunity, as appears in his words: "Behold now, I have taken it upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." He spoke again and again; and then said, "O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once." In like manner, Solomon prayed earnestly, in an humble sense of his unworthiness, "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?" Surely, according to God's majesty and holiness, as contrasted with our own weakness and sinfulness, so should be the importunity with which we address him.

The reasonableness and incumbency of such importunity will further appear, if we consider *the great value of the deliverances and positive blessings* we implore. I speak here, of course, chiefly of spiritual deliverances and blessings.

What more reasonable than that our anxiety and perseverance of pursuit should be regulated by the value of the objects we have in view? We should, unquestionably, grudge that earnestness and continuance of application to avert a trifling evil, or to obtain a trifling advantage, which we should yet think well spent to save our life, or to gain a kingdom. But, let us only think of the importance of the spiritual deliverances for which we pray to God—deliverance from destructive ignorance, error, unbelief, guilt, and pollution—deliverance from the curse of God now, and from the wrath to come—deliverance from everlasting misery—and then let us ask ourselves with what importunity we ought to pray for such deliverances. How will the man cry for help who perceives the surrounding tide approaching to overwhelm him! but how much more should we cry to God to save us from being drowned in eternal destruction and perdition! When a man has fallen into a deep pit, from which he cannot of himself get out, will he remain silent, and die without an effort to bring people to his aid? No; he will call, and call earnestly, for help; he will cry as loud as he can; nor will he be satisfied with crying once, or twice, or any number of times; he will multiply and prolong his cries—he will cry himself hoarse; and though his strength be much exhausted, he will cry from time to time, as long as he is able to utter a sound—he will never desist till his cries bring him relief. Now, that man presents but a feeble emblem of our dismal and helpless condition, as fallen into the deep pit of sin, which, if grace prevent not, is the first part of the descent into the bottomless pit. With what earnest perseverance, then, with what importunity, ought we to cry unto the Lord, that by the blood of the covenant he would bring us, poor prisoners, out of the pit wherein there is no water! Surely, we should wait patiently for the Lord, till he incline his ear unto us, and hear our cry—till he bring us up out of this horrible pit, out of this miry clay—till he set our feet on a rock, and establish our goings, and till he put a new song into our mouth, even praise to our God. “The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail:” but O with what speed, anxiety, and perseverance, should we importune the Lord God to deliver us from the wretched captivity of Satan! and how should we agonize in the prayer, “Lord, save us, else we perish!”

And then, when we think of the value of the positive

blessings we ask in prayer, we cannot but perceive that they well deserve, and strongly call for this importunity. Light, regeneration, pardon, peace, holiness, God's smile in life, his support in death, and his glorious and blissful presence for ever!—these, and such as these, which all come along with the gift of his Holy Spirit, are the good things, the blessings, which we ask of God in prayer. If important earthly advantages call forth earnestness and perseverance of pursuit, what earnestness and perseverance of pursuit should be called forth by such advantages as these! It is not a loaf, or three loaves of the bread that perisheth, that we ask; but it is the bread of life. It is not a draught of any earthly fountain, or stream, that we ask; but it is the parched soul's living water—that water, of which, if we drink, we shall never thirst again, but it shall be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is not bodily raiment, which waxeth old, that we ask; but it is the beautiful and lasting garments of salvation, it is the robe of righteousness, it is the wedding garment of the heavenly Bridegroom, it is the fine raiment that adorns the soul, it is the robe which is washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and in which, if it be put on us, we shall shine eternally in the company of the glorified. It is not human wisdom that we ask; but it is the wisdom which is from above, the being wise unto salvation. It is not bodily health we ask; but it is spiritual health from the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations. It is not the honour which cometh from man that we ask; but it is the honour that cometh from God, and which will be ours before an assembled universe. It is not what men call riches, it is not the accumulated gains of trade, it is not the wealth of both the Indies, that we ask; but it is the unsearchable riches of Christ, it is that wealth which comes through the poverty of God's eternal Son, it is the treasures which are in heaven. It is not an earthly crown of gold and precious stones, which troubles him that wears it, and is often plucked from his head and put on another, or trampled in the dust, and which he must at all events lay aside when the king of terrors comes—it is not such a crown as this that we ask; but it is a crown of glory, that fadeth not away, it is the crown of righteousness, which is laid up for the saints, and which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall, at the great day, give to all who love his appearing. Nay, it is not the whole world that we ask; for, though the world,



with its possessions and pleasures were all our own, it were an unsatisfying and transitory portion, it were a paltry trifle, it were mere dust in the balance, when weighed against the noble prize on which the prayerful have set their hearts; it is not this whole world that we ask for our portion: but it is heaven with all its unspeakable and endless happiness, it is the ever-living and infinite Jehovah himself. Such, then, being the value of the blessings we ask, how importunate should we be in asking them! How should we ask, and seek, and knock for them! Not once, or twice, or any limited number of times; but perseveringly should we pray. We should resolve not to give over till the Lord bless us indeed; we should continue to pray, till our prayers are lost in praises.

I would next mention some *encouragements* to this importunity in prayer. For example, it tends to prepare the mind for the blessings asked, and even is often the actual enjoyment of them. Importunate prayer is not intended to change the purpose of God, or to work in him a willingness to help us, as if he were originally indisposed to do so; but, while it does honour to God, and manifests our sense of the importance of the blessings we ask, it evidently tends to quicken our desire after them, and to render us more prepared to relish them when they are granted. Nay, such prayer is often the very possession of the blessings; it is an exercise of faith, penitence, humility, holiness, and love, and that, too, at the very time when we may think that we are only praying for these graces. The Lord "prevents," that is, anticipates, "us with the blessings of goodness;" and while we are praying, as well as when we are musing, the fire of devotion burns.

Again, such prayer has *the promise of being answered*. The general command to pray implies a general promise of a favourable answer. But there are many particular and express promises of this kind, especially to those who pray with earnestness and perseverance. Of this the 9th verse of this chapter is a well-known and most encouraging specimen. It is true that there are many prayers which are not answered; but the apostle James informs us of the reason of this: "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." If men address their prayers to a creature, and not to the Creator; if they apply in a spirit of self-righteousness, and not in the name of Jesus, and in a believing dependence on him for acceptance; if they pray as sufficient of them-

selves, and not as looking for the assistance of the Holy Spirit; if they pray for what is not promised; if they even pray for what is promised, without using the other appointed means; if they pray with an unworthy end in view, such as, to consume what they ask on their lusts; and if they pray with indifference, and soon desist:—in all these cases they pray amiss, there is no promise that they shall be heard, and they cannot expect to be heard. But there is no possibility of any person praying to the true object of prayer, through the proper channel, for the promised gift of the Spirit, and with importunity, and yet not being heard at last. To every one who proceeds in this way, the promise of a gracious answer is unquestionably made, and will as unquestionably be fulfilled. “If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”

Consider, too, for your further encouragement, some of the many scriptural *examples of the success* of importunate prayer. Think of Jacob wrestling with God, and prevailing. Think of Elias, who “was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth, for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” And remember that though that was a miraculous case, it is introduced in proof of the general truth that “the effectual,” or energetic, “fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Think of the woman of Canaan, who, after repeated failures, succeeded at last for her daughter.\* Think of Paul, who, after he had “besought the Lord thrice that a certain severe trial should depart from him, received what (though the trial was continued) was doubtless a most favourable answer, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” And think, above all, of the example set by the Lord Jesus Christ himself of importunate prayer; and of its result in the happy success of his sufferings for the salvation of his people. Writing of him to the Hebrews, the apostle says,† “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared:

\* Matt. xv. 22-28.

† Heb. v. 7.

though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Think of these examples, and rest assured that, if you follow them, your success will be the same.

Suffer me now, in conclusion, solemnly to ask, Are you given to such importunity in prayer? I do not ask whether you ever pray at all in any way, for, it is hardly to be supposed that any of you are altogether strangers to every mode of prayer. It is to be feared, however, that there are many of you who are, in various respects, strangers to a right spirit of prayer, and in particular, to that spirit of importunity which this passage enjoins. Do think how it is with you, in the closet, in the family, and in the house of God; and see whether you be not habitually and grossly deficient in this duty. If you are conscious that this is the case with you, apply to God for forgiveness, through faith in his Son's atonement, and seek the regenerating and converting grace of the Holy Spirit. Something more than a mere exhortation to this particular duty of prayer is necessary for you, even a total change of state and of heart. "Repent and believe the gospel." Then there will be reason to say of each of you, "Behold, he prayeth." And, though you may not exactly feel that you can pray aright, yet pray as you can, and you may expect that the Lord will teach you to pray: pray perseveringly in the appointed way, and a better spirit of prayer will come, the Lord himself will pour upon you the spirit of grace and of supplications.

Let all truly pious and praying persons, also, be admonished of their duty in this respect. I hope it is needless to enlarge in order to convince you of your imperfection here, or of the sinfulness of a careless spirit in prayer, and the great injury your souls sustain from it. I am persuaded some of you are ashamed and grieved, when you think how far you come short in this duty. Be watchful, then, lest you turn more and more remiss. Consider well what your duty, and interest, and happiness require; and stir yourselves up to call vigorously and unweariedly on the Lord. Be on your guard against worldliness, sloth, vacancy of mind, and all other hindrances to prayer; be frequent in your approaches to the throne of grace; and endeavour conscientiously to give yourselves to prayer, as often as you outwardly engage in it. Be circumspect and exemplary in your conduct, remembering that a consistent walk is neces-

sary to a praying frame of mind, as well as very important in itself. Maintain an abiding and a deep sense of the necessity of the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable you to be importunate in prayer; and pray that he may help you to pray as you ought. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And be not discouraged, nor induced to desist, though the answer should be delayed; but persevere, and all will be well. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it shall surely come, it will not tarry." Carry away from this passage, this resolution, in God's strength, that you will yet be more importunate in prayer. Pray for yourselves, and pray for others. Ask, seek, and knock. "Pray without ceasing."—"Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."—"Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

## LECTURE LVIII.

LUKE XI. 14-26.

"And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. 15. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. 16. And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. 17. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. 18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. 19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. 20. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. 21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: 22. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. 23. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. 24. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. 25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. 26. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

It is probable that Satan still exerts a baneful influence on men's bodies, though not in such a way and to such degree as to enable us to distinguish what is attributable to his operation from common disease: at all events, it is certain, from the general tenor of Scripture, that his influence over the minds of men is still very great, though it is but little thought of by many. Now, the extraordinary and strikingly obvious way in which we read of his possessing the bodies of men, during the time our Lord sojourned on earth, is well calculated to bring home to us the conviction of the truth and power of invisible, satanic agency on the mind, as is the account we have of our Lord's dispossessing him from the bodies of men, to convince us of our Lord's ability and willingness to deliver our souls from spiritual bondage; but we must not here enter at any considerable length into those points which are common to all cases of possession. We

have already had other three cases\* under consideration—the case of the man with the spirit of an unclean devil in the synagogue, the case of the Gadarene, and the case of the only son, whom the disciples could not cure. In considering this fourth case, we shall dwell chiefly on the circumstances which are peculiar to it, and to the passage connected with it, noticing, as we proceed, the spiritual improvement we ought to make of the different parts and observations introduced.

The case of this demoniac was very sad, for the devil that possessed him rendered him “*dumb*”—incapable of speaking and of hearing. When we look at the parallel passage in Matt. xii. 22, we find that the poor man laboured under the additional calamity of being “*blind*.” This was truly a pitiable case, when he could neither speak to make his wants known to others, nor hear what was said to him by his friends, nor see to provide for himself.

But have we not, in the wretched condition of this poor man, a striking representation of the still more wretched condition in which all men are naturally sunk by Satan’s spiritual reign of sin? They are dumb. The tongue is “the glory of man:” the faculty of speech is truly honourable and useful, when employed for the great end for which it was given—the glory of God; but, however voluble it may be on every other subject, it is naturally dumb as to every right expression of pious feeling. Not to speak of its too frequent use in blaspheming God, and opposing and misrepresenting the truth, it is habitually silent on the best of subjects. The unrenewed are dumb in prayer, strangers sometimes to its form, and always to its spirit. They are dumb as to religious conversation; they are “of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.” It would be amusing, were it not so melancholy, to observe how, when in the midst of their vivacity and loquaciousness, any decidedly religious sentiment is introduced, the worldly part of a company are all at once struck dumb, and look as awkward as if they could neither hear nor speak. Man was intended to be, as it were, the mouth of this lower creation, that by him God might be praised for all: but when he is left to himself, this duty is neglected; and as to true praise, there reigns one unvaried and death-like silence. Men are also spiritually deaf by nature. They hear not the voice of God. They are even like the deaf adder that stoppeth her

\* Luke iv. 33, viii. 26, ix. 37.

ear, and will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming ever so wisely. Men are also blind by nature—blind to their duty, blind to their true interest, blind to their true happiness, blind to the glory of the eternal God and of the blessed Redeemer, blind to the perception of all spiritual beauty.

Our blessed Saviour graciously interposed in behalf of the poor demoniac. He cast out the devil; and as soon as the cause of the disease was removed, the disease itself ceased, for "*the dumb spake*," or, according to Matthew, "the blind and dumb both spake and saw." How great a deliverance was this! and what joy and gratitude must it have excited in him who was the subject of it! Similar, but still more important, is the change which divine grace makes on sinners. Though formerly dumb as to everything good, their tongue is loosed, and they speak plainly; they take pleasure in discoursing of the things of God, and in pouring forth their hearts in prayer. Though formerly deaf, their ear is opened; they listen with delight to "the joyful sound;" they incline their ear and come unto Christ; they hear that their souls may live. Though formerly blind, the eyes of their understanding are opened to the spiritual world; though once darkness, they are now light in the Lord. In such happy change, as well as in the miracle before us, the words of the evangelical prophet are fulfilled, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

As might have been expected, when the people who were surrounding our Lord saw the poor distressed man cured by him in a moment, they "*wondered*." Matthew informs us that "all the people," that is, the body of the crowd, "were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?"—that is, the Messiah, who was to be descended from David. This might have been a question of inquiry, or a question of affirmation. It is true that the impression now made on the multitude was, in most of them, transitory; but it was a correct impression, for they reasoned justly from the miracle before them. Should it be pretended that the common people were less able to judge, and more ready to be deceived than the Pharisees, who are immediately afterwards said to have expressed a very different opinion: it may be

replied, that it was just the reverse; for, of a fact which was before their eyes, the people were of themselves as capable of judging as the scribes and Pharisees; and as to the conclusion to be drawn from that fact, the advantage was much on the side of the people, who were, in a great measure, free from prejudice, whereas the scribes and Pharisees were full of prejudice, and biassed by a regard to worldly reputation and interest. "So plain and easy was the way made to this great truth of Christ's being the Messiah and Saviour of the world, that the common people could not miss it; the way-faring men, though fools, could not err therein."\* This truth was revealed to babes, while it was hid from the wise and prudent. Let us remember this. If we would attain to a saving knowledge and belief of the truth, let us cultivate a lowly, unprejudiced, and teachable spirit: and if we dread the most ruinous delusion, let us beware of prejudice, superciliousness, and pride.

Verse 15: "*But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.*" Matthew states that this was said by the Pharisees, when they heard the people saying, "Is not this the Son of David?" The Pharisees denied that he was, and endeavoured to account for his working miracles, without granting his Messiahship, by pretending that he wrought them by the power of Satan, with whom he was in league. On this, and similar passages, this very important remark has frequently been made on the evidences of Christianity, that by the two classes of infidels—the ancient infidels who lived in the time of our Lord, and the modern infidels—the two great points in the proof of the divine origin of the Gospel are granted; namely, the fact of the miracles, and the inference from the fact; each class granting that point of which it is respectively best qualified to judge. These ancient infidels, the Pharisees, allowed the facts, of which they were surely competent to judge, when they were done before their eyes; but they denied the true inference—they denied that these facts proved the divine mission of Christ. Our modern infidels, on the other hand, perceive that if they were to admit the facts, if they were to admit that these miracles had been wrought, they could not deny the inference of Christ's divine mission; and therefore, without combating the inference, they deny and set themselves to disprove the facts. But the ancient infidels were the best judges of the facts, and the conclusion thence aris-

\* Henry.



ing in favour of the divine origin of the Gospel is obvious to every unprejudiced mind.

As to the name here given by the Pharisees to the chief of the devils;—Baalzebub, or Beelzebub, is mentioned in the 1st chapter of 2 Kings as “the god of Ekron,” or the idol worshipped there. The word signifies the lord of a fly, or the god of flies; but why this idol came to be so designated is not agreed among commentators, though it was, probably, because he was imagined by his deluded votaries to be useful in delivering their country from swarms of flies, with which it was, at times, much infested. This name was at last applied by the Jews to Satan, the chief of the fallen angels.

Omitting, for the present, all consideration of the 16th verse, as it is the natural introduction to the 29th verse, we shall proceed to consider our Lord’s reply to the blasphemous insinuation of the Pharisees. “*But he, knowing their thoughts,*” having a much more thorough knowledge of their sentiments than could be gathered from anything they had uttered, “*said unto them,*” replied in a way that met both their avowed and their concealed objections, “*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falleth.*” When the inhabitants of a kingdom are all of one mind, and faithful to each other, it is astonishing what outward attacks they will withstand; but when they divide into parties, and begin to contend in civil discord, they are unable to make head against the common enemy. So also ruin is the result of discord in a house or family. Let this be a lesson to all the people of God to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let them hold to the truth, but let them not violently, relentlessly, or beyond what is strictly necessary, oppose each other. To see them thus unnaturally engaged, is a great triumph to the wicked, the worldly, and the erroneous. The enemy from without is emboldened to his fiercest attacks, while, instead of facing him, they are bent on overthrowing and exposing each other. “If ye bite and devour one another,” says the apostle, “take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”

The application of this remark of our Lord’s is thus made by himself to the case in hand: “*If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.*” If it was really so, as the Pharisees pretended, that the miracles were per-

formed by Satan in league with Christ, then Satan's kingdom was divided against itself, for thus Satan would have been exerting his power, not only to set this particular person free from his dominion, but to confirm the whole doctrines and precepts of Christ, which were all directly opposed to the kingdom of Satan, and calculated and destined to overthrow it. Such a supposition, therefore, was quite inconsistent with the craft and sagacity of the devil, and was altogether untenable. On this we may remark, that however the children of the wicked one differ in other subjects, they are commonly very united in supporting their own worldly and sinful system, and opposing genuine, vital religion; nay, in this they sometimes find a bond of union, or of reconciliation, when they can find it in nothing else. When "Herod with his men of war set Jesus at nought, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him to Pilate, the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves."

Our Lord goes on to obviate the insinuation, by another argument, verse 20: "*And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.*" By the sons, or children, of the Pharisees, we may understand their disciples, or those professedly belonging to their sect and following them, but not connected with Christ. We know that there were Jews who were exorcists, that is, who professed to be able to expel demons from possessed persons, and who proceeded, some of them by magical charms, and some of them by calling over them the name of Jehovah.\* In Acts xix. 13, we read of certain Jews who went about from place to place as exorcists: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth." The superstitious use, even of the name of Jesus, without faith in his power and willingness to heal, could not be expected to avail to a miraculous cure then, and cannot effect a spiritual cure now. These exorcists not only failed, but were attacked, overcome, and wounded by the demoniac. It does not appear quite certain whether our Lord meant to acknowledge that the sons of the Pharisees did actually work such cures, or merely to reason with the Pharisees on their own principles: in either way, however, the reference he made to the Jewish exorcists was

\* Josephus, Justin Martyr, &c. Whitby on Matt. xii. 27.

quite conclusive against his opponents. It amounted to this, that the Pharisees, who were accustomed to consider their own disciples as exorcising in the name of God, should have applied the same rule to Jesus Christ, and not have rashly attributed his works of that kind to Satan; therefore, their own adherents were their judges—they furnished considerations to convict them of malicious partiality in this case. Thus it frequently happens, that, in their eagerness to condemn others, men advance arguments which, when correctly applied, condemn themselves. Let us avoid this, from a regard both to ourselves, and to justice to others; and, wherever there is room for a favourable construction, let us avoid rashly and uncharitably imputing the apparently good actions of others to improper motives and an evil instigation.

Verse 20: "*But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.*" The expression, "The finger of God," was probably employed in allusion to the expression of the Egyptian magicians,\* when they said, in reference to one of Moses' miracles which they could not imitate, "This is the finger of God." And the expression may be considered as teaching that the miracles were wrought by the power of God, and yet with the utmost ease; requiring (to speak after the manner of men) not the full strength of his arm, but only a touch of his finger. According to Matthew, our Lord said, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God." The agency of the Holy Ghost is to be especially acknowledged in Christ's miracles; and it was this which constituted the imputing of them to Beelzebub the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the agency of all the three persons in the Trinity was here; for, Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." But, if it was so that Jesus' miracles were performed by divine power, then the conclusion was inevitable, that he was Messiah, and that the kingdom of God, the gospel dispensation, was come. This is, indeed, the grand conclusion to which his miracles should lead us; and, while we admit it in theory, let us see that we follow it out in fact, by the cordial reception of all the doctrines he teaches, and the actual obedience of his holy commandments.

Verses 21 and 22: "*When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his*

\* Exod. viii. 19.

*spoils.*" The meaning of this, in the literal sense, is very obvious. So also is its application to this particular miracle; for, the overthrow and expulsion of the evil spirit proved that Jesus was stronger than he. But our Lord here evidently leads us on to consider the deliverance of the soul from the power of Satan. Satan is well compared to "a strong man." He was originally one of the holy angels, who are said to "excel in strength;" and though fallen, he is still very formidable. He is "the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name, in the Hebrew tongue, is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue, hath his name Apollyon," that is, the destroyer. He is called "The dragon, that old serpent, the devil," and "The god of this world." Again, the heart of every unconverted person is Satan's palace; there he dwells, and there he rules; he is "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," he has access to their hearts as he entered into the hearts of Judas and Ananias. As a strong man, he is armed—armed with his own power and wiles, and with the ignorance, error, prejudices, unbelief, pride, and lusts of his subjects, all which he turns to his own account. As a strong man armed he *keeps* his palace; once in possession of a human heart, he does all he can to maintain his hold of it. He defends it like a garrison; he fortifies it against God and Christ, that he may still keep it in an ungodly and careless state, and retain it for himself. While he holds the palace of the heart, all its powers may be called "his goods," his effects, his possessions, as they are all employed in his service. While he holds it, his goods are "in peace." There is, undoubtedly, often a kind of peace in unconverted men. They have a good opinion of themselves; they flatter themselves in their own eyes. They say to their soul, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." They say to themselves, "Peace, peace," while there is no true peace. But, blessed be God! strong as is Satan, there is one who is stronger than he, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our deliverer. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the mighty God. "All power, also, is given unto him in heaven and on earth," as Mediator. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of

the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." He is far stronger than "the strong man;" and whenever he attacks, he overthrows him. He has already gained the great and decisive victory from which his enemy cannot recover; "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." So, in consequence of his superior strength, he still gains the victory for his people, when they confide in him. In the language of John, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." And, however confident "the strong one" may be in his armour, the stronger than he wrests it out of his hands, and turns it against him. Does the devil strive to keep Christ out of men's hearts, and to preserve his own influence over them, by the weapon of ignorance? Christ wrests it from him by letting in a stream of light. Does he strive to hold them fast by error? Christ causes them to know the truth. Does he keep them by pride? Christ humbles them:—by unbelief? Christ bestows on them the grace of faith:—by the love of sin? Christ renews and sanctifies them. Satan may vary and prolong the struggle, but he is foiled at last. The spiritual weapons are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Jesus prevails, takes possession of the citadel of the heart, and drives out the usurper. Then "he divideth his spoils;" he takes possession of them for himself; all the endowments of mind, or body, the estate, power, interest, which before were made use of in the service of sin, and Satan, are now converted to Christ's service, and employed for him; yet that is not all—he makes a distribution of them among his followers, and having conquered Satan, gives to all believers the benefit of that victory.\*

Having thus adverted to the great contest which is carrying on between sin and holiness, Satan and Christ, our Lord proceeds to teach that, in the contest, he does not allow of any neutrality. "*He that is not with me,*" says he, "*is against me.*" We formerly noticed the consistency of this

\* Henry.

declaration with that in the 9th chapter and 50th verse: "He that is not against us is for us." In that case, our Lord was speaking of one who, in the midst of much imperfection, had a true regard for him, and would not lightly speak evil of him, and who, therefore, was to be acknowledged, in so far as he supported the cause of the Gospel. But here, Jesus is speaking of those who slighted his miracles, and rejected his doctrines, and of those, too, who, in such circumstances, would not distinctly and boldly take part with him: all such, it is plain, must have been against him. And, in much the same sense, he adds, "*And he that gathereth not with me scattereth;*" that is, probably, He that does not endeavour with me to gather subjects into my kingdom, does, in effect, drive them away from me. Let us mark, here, the absolute necessity of taking our part decidedly with Christ, if we hope to be sharers of his kingdom. We cannot serve God and mammon. If we seek to be neither for Christ nor against him, he counts us among his enemies. Let us not halt, then, between two opinions. Let those who have not yet declared for Christ now avouch him for their Lord. And let those who are on his side think, not only of their state, but of their habits, and let them remember that they cannot innocently remain neutral where duty is clear, or stand aloof when the Saviour is mustering his friends; and let them remember that when they are not doing good, they are doing evil. The complete sense seems, then, to require us to conclude, that if even those who do not appear professedly with Christ are against him, much more so are his avowed and daring opposers.\*

The remaining verses run thus: "*When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*" It is likely that something of this kind occurred in literal possessions; that is, that an unclean spirit went out of a man, and returned again to torment him worse than before. But there would be a difference between

\* Cicero thus addresses Cæsar: "We have heard you say that we reckon all those our enemies, except those who are with us; but that you reckon all those your friends who are not against you.—*Nos omnes adversarios putare nisi qui nobiscum essent: te omnes qui contra te non essent, tuos.*"—*Orat. pro Ligario, ad finem.*

his going out, as it is here expressed, and his being cast out. When he went out, of himself, and for some malicious purpose, he might return again; but, when he was driven out by Christ, he dared not return. Thus, we read in Mark xi. 25, that Jesus "rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." Every such cure was a complete and lasting cure.

But it is plain that, in these three verses, our Lord had chiefly in view to direct our attention to a very common and delusive case, namely, *the case of a partial reformation, without thorough conversion*. The devil is called the "unclean spirit," as he is unclean; that is, spiritually polluted, or unholy in himself, and as he seeks to sink men into similar pollution. We have already noticed that he worketh in all the children of disobedience, and we are now reminded that he sometimes withdraws for a season, so that the sinner appears to have escaped from his thralldom, and to be very much improved in character. The devil never can be at rest, or peace, anywhere, because he has departed from God, the only centre of rest; but he is, if possible, more miserable than usual, when he is not employed in the work of corrupting others. In this his restless state, he is a true emblem of wicked men, of whom we read, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. They are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest." To gratify his malevolence, the devil returns to the house, or heart, which he had left; and, you observe, it is called *his* house, for it is still his property, it has not changed owners, though it has been standing empty for a short time. When he returns, he finds it "swept;" it is swept, or cleared of gross pollutions, and of scandalous offences; but it is not thoroughly cleansed. It is swept, but not washed. It is even "garnished," or ornamented. It is, perhaps, ornamentally furnished with the decencies of life, and even with something of the form of religion; but there is in it no true grace, no sincerity of goodness. All is appearance, not reality—varnish, not solidity—show, not substance. All is like the whited sepulchre; therefore, Satan returns, and finds it still his own dwelling—a dwelling more fitted than ever for himself. And, when the unclean spirit returns, he takes with him "seven"—that is, a considerable number, a certain for an uncertain number—"seven other spirits more wicked than himself:"—from which it appears that there are many fallen

spirits, that they are of different degrees of wickedness, and that they associate together in their diabolical schemes; "and they enter in and dwell there." The people of God cannot be finally overcome by Satan; but many of the characters here described are permanently possessed by him. Such relapses, after some partial conviction and reformation, were exemplified in Felix and Herod; and, it is to be feared, in Demas. "And the last state of that man is worse than the first." It is worse as to his sin, for his conscience is seared, and his transgression increased; and it is worse as to his punishment, for his hypocrisy and his relapse aggravate, not only his guilt, but his doom. In the language of Peter, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Though we have already noticed, in going along, much of the improvement to be derived from this passage, a few sentences are yet called for in conclusion.

Let us beseech you all to think, with deep seriousness and personal examination, of the view which this passage gives of *your state by nature*. You are naturally dumb, and deaf, and blind, as to spiritual things. Inquire, then, whether you have recovered the faculties of speech and hearing, and be using them in such a way as God requires. Inquire if you have recovered the faculty of sight, and are now blessed with spiritual discernment. If you think you have recovered these faculties, and if it be unquestionable that you do speak of the things of God in a certain way, and do know something at least of the theory of the gospel, consider whether the holy tenor of your actions be showing that your speech is sincere, and your light, or wisdom, from above. Do not hastily conclude that you are delivered from the evil one, merely because you feel nothing of that uneasiness and alarm which you may be ready to suppose his actual dwelling in you and working in you must necessarily occasion; for, remember this, that very generally, "when the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in



peace." It is possible you may be at peace, merely because, like a dark and stagnant pool sheltered all around, your conscience has never been ruffled by any breath of celestial wind. There may be nothing to disturb the even tenor of your worldliness. Everything is quiet, when everything is going one way.

Think also, with the same seriousness and personal examination, of *several things which are here shown to be included in true conversion*. For example, the false peace of nature has been dissipated, that the true peace, the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, may fill the heart through Christ Jesus. Satan is destroyed and cast out, so as no longer to bear sway over the soul. Christ, the king of glory, who is king by right, becomes king in fact, and reigns in the affections and lives of his regenerated people. Their eyes are open to see his glory, and their tongue is loosed to speak of his work, and to celebrate his praise. They are not only nominally and apparently, but indeed and in truth, brought over to his side. The palace has changed owners, and it is not only swept, but washed; it is not garnished with gewgaws, but adorned with every substantial excellence. There is a thorough change in their state, for they have passed from a state of condemnation to a state of acceptance, and from a state of depravity and deadness, to a state of sanctification and newness of life. Think of all this, and consider how it is with yourselves.

Learn also here, *how true conversion is effected*; it is by the finger of God; it is by divine power, through the regenerating agency of the Spirit, and the redeeming work of the Son. This is, at once, most humbling and most encouraging. You cannot deliver yourselves from this wretched and polluting bondage, and this inability is the very climax and essence of your sin. The thought of this were enough to drive you to despair, were it not that, however strong your tyrant may be, the Redeemer is stronger than he. Look to Jesus, and he will rescue you. He has borne your iniquities, "Therefore will the Lord divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."—"Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."

Believers! remember that, though you are delivered from

the reign of Satan, he will still be seeking to obtain some influence over you. Though expelled, he will lie in wait for opportunities to steal back into the palace of your hearts. Though he cannot utterly overthrow you, he may annoy you very grievously by his assaults. He had the audacity even to attempt the Saviour himself, and he did succeed in greatly troubling Peter and Paul. Guard, then, every avenue to your hearts, lest he come and break in upon you unawares. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." When he returns to your palace, let him not find it empty; but let him find it completely occupied, full of all good—full of an indwelling Deity. Thus, there being no room for him, he will sullenly depart; and, though he come again, he will come in vain. The gates of hell shall not prevail against you. In due time, you shall be removed to the heavenly city, into which sin and Satan can in no wise enter; and you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.

## LECTURE LIX.

LUKE XI. 27, 28.

"And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28. But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

IN proof of his divine mission in general, and more particularly of his designation and ability to destroy, in every sense, the works of the devil, our Lord, as appears from the harmonized history of Matthew and Luke, had just cured a poor man, who, in consequence of a demoniacal possession, had been both blind and dumb. The Pharisees, however, when they could not deny the fact of the miracle, imputed it, with inexcusable obstinacy and monstrous malignity, to our Saviour's being in league with Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. Jesus then made a triumphant reply to this blasphemous insinuation, exposing the absurdities which it involved, and demonstrating that the legitimate inference from such a miracle was, that the kingdom of God, the reign of Messiah, was come. In addition to this, in a strain of illustration suggested, as it would seem, by the wonder which he had just performed, and with a particular view to his malicious accusers, Jesus was going on to describe the awful state of those who, notwithstanding some partial convictions and reformatations, and some appearances of religion, were still spiritually possessed by the wicked one—still unrenewed, and who, therefore, relapsed into greater iniquity than ever, so that their last state was worse than their first. "*And it came to pass as Jesus spake these things*"—while he was proceeding in this strain of cogent argument, and divine admonition, "*a certain*" believing and affectionate "*woman*" was so struck, at once with the base and ungenerous aspersions which had been cast on him, and with the united attraction of his works and of his words, that, regardless of the scorn of the scribes and Pharisees, and bursting through

the restraints of timidity and false shame, she rapturously and loudly exclaimed, from the midst of the crowd, "*Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou has sucked!*" And who of the disciples that heard her, would not feel disposed to echo back the sound? or, what heart that has been touched by the Saviour's grace, does not still respond to the sentiment? At the same time, it is probably as necessary for us, as it was for his immediate auditors, to attend to his subjoined explanatory corrective, "*Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*" Let us consider, therefore, first, the woman's exclamation; and, secondly, the amendment our Lord made on it.

I. Let us consider *the woman's exclamation*: "*Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.*"

It is not to be overlooked, that, while this exclamation speaks directly of the blessedness of our Lord's mother, it does, though in an indirect, yet in a very strong manner, imply the blessedness of our Lord himself, the idea being that from him a blessedness was reflected on his mother. In this implied reference to the grace and glory of the Redeemer, as rendering him worthy of the highest honour and praise, there is nothing but what is altogether commendable and deserving of imitation. Well might the woman thus praise the Saviour; and well might the multitude, at another time, exclaim, "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*" The time is assuredly coming, when, experiencing the happiness of his reign, all nations shall pronounce their loudest blessings on his name. Happy, meanwhile, every one of us who can heartily take up the sublime strain, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*"

It is obvious, however, as already hinted, that the exclamation was directly and chiefly intended to proclaim the blessedness of our Lord's mother. Neither is it, in this sense, to be condemned. Jesus himself does not deny, and we ought not to question its truth.

The happiness of parents is very much involved in the conduct and history of their children. The relation is most intimate and most tender. Their offspring are so closely entwined round their heart, as to occasion them, either most acute anguish, or most exquisite pleasure. How deeply

parents are often grieved by the calamities, or the misconduct of their children, is exemplified in Jacob's grief for his supposed loss of Joseph, and in David's lamentation over the awful wickedness and actual destruction of Absalom. Both parents feel deeply on such occasions; but the maternal bosom is usually torn with peculiar pangs. In reference to the distress of mothers, on account of the impending calamities of their offspring in the siege of Jerusalem, our Lord said to the women who were bewailing and lamenting him as he was led forth to be crucified, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." On the other hand, how great the pleasure which accrues to parents from their children's virtues and successes! By these their parental cares are more than requited, and the smile of complacency is diffused over the face of their most advanced age. Truly and well does Solomon teach and exhort, "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."—"Hearken," therefore, "unto thy father that begat thee; and despise not thy mother when she is old." It would be well (we may observe in passing) if this wise ordination of the Author of humanity were properly considered and improved by those whose parents are yet alive. Who would not, at least in principle, and who should not in fact, shudder at the idea of wilfully planting a thorn in the breast of those to whom, under God, he owes his being, and of bringing down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Who would not desire to make glad those with whom his own welfare constitutes the fondest earthly wish? Who does not feel that it is a great addition to his own enjoyment of any success, that they also are to be cheered by it? When Epaminondas, the Theban general, gained the great triumph over the Spartans at Leuctra, he said, "My joy consists chiefly in knowing that my father and mother will hear of my victory."

Such is the general principle on which the zealous and affectionate woman founded the exclamation under review; and it is a principle which recommends itself too readily to the feelings of the human breast to require any further illustration. But, if it is thus a general truth that parents are happy in the happiness of their children, how great must have been the happiness of such a woman as the Virgin

Mary, in having such a son as Jesus Christ! Vast indeed were the blessedness and the honour which were hers. Never was woman so highly honoured, as she was in being selected from among the millions of her sex to be the mother of the greatest and best Being this world ever beheld—the mother of him who is styled the Consolation of Israel, the Desire of all nations, the only begotten and beloved Son of God. In this she was blessed, truly blessed, and divinely pronounced blessed; and she foresaw that she was in all ages to be called blessed.\* When the angel Gabriel appeared to her, he said, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”—“Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called, The Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” In like manner, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, who had honoured her with a visit, “Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?” On this, Mary herself thus took up her rejoicing strain, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

And, as Mary was blessed in bringing forth such a son at first, so she was blessed in his future character and exploits. She was blessed in his dutiful conduct as a son: for “he went down to Nazareth, and was subject” unto his parents. She was blessed in the progressive improvement of his human nature, for, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” She was blessed in the whole tenor of his holy life, as he was perfectly free from all taint of sin, and exhibited a pattern of every grace. She was blessed in hearing many of his delightful discourses, as she frequently attended his ministrations, and formed one of the many hearers who “bore him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” She was blessed in seeing many of the wonderful works which

\* Luke i. 28, 42, 48.

he performed; for on many other occasions of this kind it might have been said, as it was said on that at Cana in Galilee, that "the mother of Jesus was there." She was blessed in the knowledge of the great work which, in every part of his eventful history, he was successfully employed in prosecuting—the work of promoting the glory of God, in connexion with the redemption and eternal happiness of sinful and perishing men. She was blessed in his glorious resurrection and ascension, when he rose a conqueror over death and hell, and when he was taken up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, to wait till all his enemies be made his footstool. There she still continues to be blessed in contemplating his blessedness, and in hearing the blessings which are multiplied on his name. It is no great stretch of imagination to suppose that by some of the glorified, who may meet her in heaven, where the Redeemer is beheld enthroned with the Father, she may be occasionally addressed in some such language as this, "Hail, Mary, thou art highly favoured. The prosperity of every son gives joy to his mother's heart; but what mother's son was ever exalted so high as thine? Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"

Having thus considered the woman's exclamation, let us consider,

II. *Our Lord's amendment on it:* "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

We have already noticed that, in this, our Lord does not contradict what the pious woman had said. He only modifies and explains it, and makes an addition to it. He allows that there was much truth in it, when properly understood; but he directs his hearers to something still more important, and to a blessedness still more complete. Now, his amendment on the woman's words teaches us,

1. *That the happiness of Mary herself consisted rather in her being a believer in Christ, than in her being the mother of Christ.* Great as was her happiness in being his mother, it was by no means unmixed with circumstances of a painful nature. It was indeed a high honour to be the mother of that child who was called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace:" but, though the stateliest palace, and every possible attendance, would have been too mean for such an event, she was necessitated to bring forth her son in a stable, and

to cradle him in a manger. Nor could her alarm and fatigue have been slight, when, soon after his birth, she was compelled to flee with him into Egypt, because "Herod sought the young child to destroy him." His devotion to his heavenly "Father's business" occasioned her great uneasiness, when, at twelve years of age, Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and when she and Joseph "sought him sorrowing." Nor can there be a doubt that she was often much distressed by the various hardships and indignities of his subsequent life. But all the other sorrows which arose from her relation to him, were greatly surpassed by those which flowed to her from his last sufferings and death. When we consider what the death of crucifixion was—how it was every thing that was ignominious, painful, lingering, and accursed; it is truly affecting to think that the mother of Jesus stood by his cross while he was suffering,\* and that, too, so near, that he not only saw her, but spoke to her. The scene must have been inexpressively agonizing, and like a dagger to her heart. It was in allusion chiefly to this, that Simeon said of Jesus to Mary, in the temple,† "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against: yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Instead, then, of being calculated to fill her with unmixed joy, the history of her Son included several events so painful, that nothing but a principle of faith founded on some idea of the blessed consequences which they were to subserve, could have supported her mind under them.

It is true, as we have already seen, that there were many circumstances in her Son's history which were, in themselves, very delightful; but it is certain that whatever of real honour and pleasure she derived from these, was dependent on her faith. This must be apparent, when it is considered that if she had been an unbelieving and unholy woman, her intimate relation to Jesus, and her many opportunities of intercourse with him, which might have been turned so much to her advantage, instead of contributing to her blessedness, would have added greatly to her guilt, and disgrace, and ruin. By ministering, however, to her faith and holiness, they ministered also to her true happiness. But, however great her happiness thus unquestionably was, she enjoyed much greater advantages, and was, of course, much more blessed, as the Redeemer's disciple, than as his mother. Our Lord teaches this in the words under consideration.

\* John xix. 25.

† Luke ii. 34.



Nor ought it to escape observation, that in what Elisabeth said to her respecting her blessedness, another part of which has been already quoted, a prominent place is assigned to Mary's faith.\* "Blessed is she that *believed*: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."† The obvious truth is, that Mary could have derived no spiritual advantage whatever from Christ, in consequence of being his mother, but that the most precious spiritual blessings flowed to her from him, in consequence of that faith of which the tenor of her words and actions furnished most satisfactory evidence. She was thus united to him by a much more important tie than the tie of nature; for this alone it was that constituted her *saving* connexion with him.

We are here further taught, in the 2d place, *That all true believers, as such, are more blessed than Christ's mother, as such.*

In his annunciation of this truth, our Lord introduces a description of believers, or true Christians, to which we must shortly advert:—they "hear the word of God, and keep it." "The word of God," in its most extensive sense, includes the whole of revelation; but here, as in other places of the New Testament especially, it seems to signify the gospel, or that part of revelation which most directly unfolds the way of salvation. Thus it is said† that multitudes "pressed upon" Christ, "to hear the word of God." Now, it is no small advantage to have the opportunity of hearing the word of God, even with the outward ear: and yet, it cannot be said that all who thus hear it are truly "blessed," for there are many who thus hear it, but who pay no attention to it, or reject it. "They seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. For their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted." The hearers, then, who are blessed, must be those who hear attentively, believingly, and obediently. Thus, Jesus says, "He that is of God, heareth God's words."—"My sheep hear my voice, and follow me." They "hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit." Such were the Thessalonians, who, "when they received the word of God which they heard, received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe." But Christians are here also said to "*keep*" the word of God.

\* Luke i. 45.

† Luke v. 1.

They are not inconstant. They are "the good ground" hearers, who, "in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." They keep it, both in their faith, as the ground of their hope, and in their practice, as the rule of their life. They "hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end." They "keep God's commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that they should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave them commandment."

Persons of this character are here declared to be more blessed than even the Virgin Mary was, merely as the mother of our Lord. Was she honoured in her maternal relation to him?—they are all connected with him by a still closer relation, even by that union in consequence of which he and they are said to be one. Thus, in his intercessory prayer for his disciples, he said, "Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Had she much pleasant intercourse with him as his mother?—their communion with him is still more delightful, for their "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," who "dwells in their hearts by faith." This communion, too, is not like the communion which consisted in being related to him, or knowing him, after the flesh, for that was withdrawn, when it became expedient that he should go away, and when he left his affectionate mother and all his sorrowing disciples behind him: but, as this is a spiritual, so it is an abiding communion, in respect of which he is with his people always, and never leaves them, nor forsakes them. In short, they are blessed with all those spiritual and saving blessings to which Mary, merely as the mother of Jesus, could never have attained. They are blessed with light, pardon, sanctification, comfort, and every present privilege; and all these as sure pledges of the everlasting blessedness of heaven. Their present happiness in the knowledge, belief, and obedience of the gospel, is thus described by the Psalmist: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy

righteousness shall they be exalted." And their blessedness in respect of future stability, and final and complete salvation, is thus described by our Lord: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."—"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Thus, all believers, as such, are more blessed than the mother, and it may be added, than any of the relations, of Christ, as "according to the flesh." Those of his relations, indeed, who heard and kept his word, were highly blessed and honoured: their consanguinity, however, gave them no preference as to divine acceptance and salvation; for, as to every thing of that nature, all who were equally faithful and obedient, were regarded by him with equal affection. All this is beautifully and impressively taught in the following passage:\* "While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

There is still another idea included in this amendment of our Lord's; for, in its most extended meaning, it states a comparison, not only between the advantage of true religion, and that of having been the mother of Jesus, but also between the advantage of true religion, and all other advantages whatever. We are here taught, then,

*Lastly, That those who are believers, are more blessed on that account, than on any other.*

If, my friends, you really know, and believe, and obey the gospel, then, however blessed you may be in other points of view, we hesitate not to say, "Yea, rather blessed are ye, because ye hear the word of God, and keep it." We pronounce you far more blessed on this account, than you are,

\* Matt. xii. 46.

or can be, on account of any *worldly advantages*. Are you *rich*? or, at least, in easy circumstances?—then it is true that you may be, in some degree, happy in freedom from anxiety about your temporal wants, and in the moderate enjoyment of earthly good: but what are such possessions, in comparison of your spiritual treasures, the unsearchable riches of Christ? “All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” Other possessions are uncertain and temporary, for they may leave you soon, and, at all events, you must be taken away from them: but yours are the better, the “durable riches;” yours is the “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away.” Will you, then, “set your eyes upon that which is not? for, riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven.” Rather say, “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver:” and be studious more and more to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Are you *learned* in human knowledge?—so far well, for therein you may find much rational enjoyment. But rather blessed are you because you are taught of God in the wisdom which is from above, and instructed to know the Holy Scriptures, which have proved sufficient to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Continue, therefore, to cultivate this wisdom as your most delightful and most profitable study. “Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom.” On earth, “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace:” and in heaven, those who are thus “wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.” Are you in possession of the *esteem and love* of the wise and good?—you have cause to rejoice, for, “a good name is rather to be chosen than riches, and loving favour than silver and gold.” But much more are you blessed in being honoured and beloved by the living God, who says to every child of his own, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.” Seek, then, above all things, “the honour that cometh from God only.” Are you possessed of some *power* in the world?—this may be useful. But it is of much more importance to you that you have power to “rule over your own spirit,” that you have obtained a victory over sin, nay, that, as princes, you have “power with God, and have prevailed.” Rejoice, then, in

this ennobling power; "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," and you shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you. Are you blessed in the enjoyment of that *liberty* and all those immunities which are the birthright of every native of this happy land, on whose soil, when the slave plants his foot, he from that moment becomes free?—how little would that freedom avail you, if you had not recovered yourselves out of the snare of the devil, and were still of those who are taken captive by him at his will! But you are emancipated from sin, from Satan, and from a spirit of legality, and bondage, and terror; and you are blessed in all the immunities of the citizens of Zion. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage:" for thus, "being made free from sin, and having become the servants of God, ye shall have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Are you in bodily *health*?—the blessing is great. But it is a still higher cause of congratulation that you have been directed to the Physician of souls, by whom, when your spiritual cure is completed, you shall be brought to that healthful country, where the inhabitant shall never say, "I am sick; because the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity." You rejoice, and it is right that you should rejoice, in the blessing of temporal *life*: for "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" "skin upon skin"—one part of his property after another, "nay, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." You cannot live here, however, always. Temporal life, at best, is but a vapour; and when it is spent in a state of alienation from God, it is a prelude to the second death. But you are quickened into spiritual life, which will ripen into life that never ends. This divine life, then, you should most fondly cherish: and you should often be saying to its Author, "Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." But we may go farther than this, and say, that those who hear the word of God and keep it, are blessed, even though destitute of any worldly advantages, rather than if, in a state of irreligion, they were possessed of them all. Nay, believers are not only blessed in their faith more than in any other blessing; but they are highly blessed notwithstanding of all worldly troubles. There is here what may well cheer their minds in opposition to every disadvantage. They may be poor, despised, and distressed; but their principles enable

them with readiness to choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," and to "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures" of the world; for they "have respect to the recompense of reward." They know that it is better to suffer any thing here, than to come short of happiness hereafter;—better to enter into life halt, or maimed, or with one eye, than having two hands, or two feet, or two eyes, to be cast into everlasting fire. And, even in the meantime, they are happier than they could be on any other principles. Though the fig-tree should not blossom, though all that the worldling calls happiness should have fled, they can still rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation. Let me, then, persuade you who hear the word of God and keep it, that you are most blessed, and that you ought to be most thankful. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." A spirit of dejection ill becomes you. It is safe and meet for yourselves, and it is due to that God who makes and who pronounces you blessed, that you should actually be, and appear to be happy, and that you should now rejoice in that in which you are to rejoice for ever. It is quite within the bounds of truth, then, to say, that those who hear the word of God and keep it, are more blessed on that account, than on account of any worldly advantages.

It is, however, still more exactly in accordance with the spirit of this amendment, to remark that those who are believers are more blessed on that account than they are, or can be, on account of any *outward religious privileges*. Our privileges, in this respect, are great indeed. To have been born, not in any of the dark places of the earth, which are the habitations of idolatry, impurity, and horrid cruelty, but in a land of Christian light; to have in our own language the Word of God, that guide to a glorious immortality; to have our ministers, our Sabbaths, our sanctuaries, our sacraments, and all our means of conversion and edification:—these are valuable privileges, in consequence of which it may be said to us, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." But what did even the bodily presence, and teaching, and miracles of the Son of God avail the multitudes who would not hearken to him? Instead of proving a blessing, these privileges aggravated their guilt and condemnation. In like manner, it can be no cause of congratulation to any, that, in this age and this quarter of

the world, they are enjoying distinguished privileges, if they are failing to improve them. On such persons, the Lord Jesus, instead of proclaiming a blessing, may be considered as denouncing a woe. It was such conduct which, of old, called forth the unusual voice of his upbraiding:—"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!"—"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell."—"I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." Is it not obvious, then, that it is the being enabled to improve these privileges, so as to hear the word of God and keep it, which constitutes the chief cause of happiness? To every one to whom these outward means have proved effectual for inward illumination and vital godliness, our Lord may be considered as saying, as he did formerly to the son of Jonas, "Blessed art thou; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

It is thus, too, with regard to all those gifts, and attainments, and services, which are not the accompaniments of real piety, and of the belief and obedience of the truth. However great these gifts and attainments may be, they are of far less moment to their possessor than even the smallest portion of saving grace. However much, for example, a man's intellectual powers may be exercised on the subject of religion, however strong and retentive his memory, however uncommon his ability to speak and act; nay, however splendid the success which may attend his instrumentality: all these circumstances together do not constitute him a Christian; and therefore, he has less reason to rejoice in them, than in those less dazzling, but more substantial blessings, of genuine piety, which are common to all the heirs of glory. We read, in the 10th chapter of Luke, that some time after our Lord had sent forth the seventy disciples to preach the gospel, and to work miracles, they "returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." On this, our Lord, among other things, said: "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." It was not that these victories over Satan afforded no cause for joy: on the contrary, we are expressly told that "in that hour Jesus" himself "rejoiced in spirit." But he saw something not altogether right in the temper of the seventy, or at least, some error into which

they were in danger of falling. They were, perhaps, somewhat vain of their gifts, and in danger of placing them in the room of the graces of pardon and holiness; or, the celebrity which these miraculous powers had procured, was leading them, comparatively, to forget their own obligations to divine mercy. He therefore directed them to another and more solid cause of joy, namely, their own personal interest in electing love, and heavenly citizenship. We know that, at the last day, many will say to him, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" to whom he will profess, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." And we also know that he will welcome to his heavenly kingdom the humblest and weakest of his loving and obedient people. There can be no doubt, therefore, who are now to be pronounced "rather blessed."

The same holds true as to the being closely *connected with eminently pious persons*. By all right thinking men it must be felt as a call for much gratitude, and a source of great comfort, that they have been, or that they are, related to persons who, there is every reason to believe, are either arrived at heaven, or on the way that leads to it. The passage before us, however, lifts up a warning against building on such an advantage, to the neglect of personal religion. Surely, if any human relation could have saved any of the fallen race of Adam, the relation of Mary to Jesus, as his mother, must have saved her; but we have seen that it had no such effect, for she had her salvation from him, as her surety and her Lord, believed in and obeyed. It is also to be particularly remembered, that though Christ's mother was a believer, the generality of his near relations were not believers, for it is said, \* "Neither did his brethren believe on him." Where is he, then, that congratulates himself on the piety of his parents, or children, or brethren, or any of his dear connexions, when to that piety he himself is a stranger? Dost thou not consider, O blinded man, that a parent's, or a child's, or a partner's, or a brother's, or a sister's, or a teacher's, or a minister's, or any relation's or friend's example, but example not copied—and advices and entreaties, but advices and entreaties disregarded—and prayers and tears, but prayers and tears uttered and shed, as for thee, in vain;—dost thou not consider that all these circumstances now prove thee to be inexcusably and deeply guilty, and are all

\* John vii. 5.



registering to be brought forth against thee at the final reckoning? "When the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; and when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe:"—thinkest thou that any of these connexions will avail for thy safety and triumph in that day? Impossible! It will then be seen that, in consequence of thine own infatuated choice, thy intercourse with them is at an end, and all opportunity of thy being advantaged by them for ever gone by. And does thy heart sink within thee at the thought of being for ever separated from those who are so dear to it?—now is the time for taking steps to prevent so sad a parting. Now is the time, if thou wouldst be saved, I do not say by, but *with*, thy godly friends, now is the time to follow them—now is the time to "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew,"\* of him who is a believer, a Christian, and to say, "I will go with you, for I have heard that God is with you." If this be neglected till the trump of God shall have awakened thee from the dust, and summoned thee before the judgment-seat, it will be too late for thee to think of it then. Vain will then be the attempt to take hold of the skirt and to implore the help of any of thy pious friends, that with them thou mayst be borne aloft to bliss: for, while they are caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the sky, thou shalt sink down by thine own weight—a leaden weight of impenitence and of despair. Happy, thrice happy they, who are knit together by those ties of grace which shall only become closer and more endearing, when all earthly ties shall be loosed, and when they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but be as the angels in heaven! Blessed in that they have religious connexions, they are far more blessed in that they themselves are kindred spirits with them in Christ; for thus they form part of the most noble of all families, and thus they have, and ever shall retain, God for their Father, Jesus Christ for their elder brother, the Holy Spirit for their Comforter, and the whole saints and holy angels for their companions in all the blessedness which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him.

\* Zech. viii. 23.

We shall now advert to two points, in concluding.

First. This passage, taken as a whole, teaches us *right views of Mary, the mother of Jesus*. In conjunction with other passages of sacred writ, it establishes her claim to be thought of with pleasure, to be imitated in various respects, to be spoken of with the regard which is due to a holy and honoured human being, and to be called blessed. It would be quite unscriptural not cheerfully to allow all this; and those who deny it fall into the extreme of disrespect. At the same time, there is another extreme which is here guarded against, and which, while it is more dangerous in itself, has unhappily obtained a most melancholy prevalence among many who bear the Christian name—the Popish extreme of exalting her to a participation in that worship which is due only to the Deity, and in that intercessory work which is performed only by her Son. Not to insist on the excessive length to which this absurd superstition has been carried in the variety of strange inventions which have been foisted into her history, and in the almost endless repetitions of the Ave Marias and other addresses, which, pervading the worship of the Papists, appear in a most extravagant light in what they call the Rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin: the leading principle, that she is to be applied to, to intercede for us with her Son, that he may intercede for us with God, is, in respect of Scripture, utterly baseless, and in respect of reason, utterly absurd. Nowhere does Scripture hint at her, or any other person in heaven, being applied to, to intercede for us with Christ; but everywhere does it teach us to go directly to Christ, and to Christ alone, to intercede for us with the Father. Mary was a mere woman, possessed only of human power; nay, she was a sinner, though a sinner saved by grace: how then can she have influence, or merit, or any store of grace, or be any channel of grace, for the salvation of other sinners? That the angel should address her, when actually present, in the words, “Hail, highly favoured,” was quite natural and becoming: but for any to fall down on their knees, and address her, “Hail, Mary,” now that she has left the world, is doubtless very absurd and unscriptural. To suppose that she can now see and hear her votaries on earth, is very irrational: but, as it is supposed by multitudes that she does see and hear them, while they invoke her in every quarter of the world, this is to ascribe to her the divine perfections of omnipresence and omniscience, and no sophistry can so

explain away this, as to free them from the charge of idolatry. It is the more incumbent to speak out plainly on this point, as the superstition, in conjunction with a kindred train of errors, still bears over the minds of its adherents an unmitigated sway. Let us commiserate those who are thus blinded; and let us employ all scriptural means that they may be brought unequivocally to hold that, as there is but one God, so there is but "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," and honestly to renounce all trust in the merits of creatures, and to look for acceptance only in the Beloved. At the same time, let us look also to ourselves, and beware of every sentiment which stands in the way of faith and holiness—in the way of a hearty submission to the gospel. The spirit of will-worship, and of false trust, is characteristic of our fallen nature. To what device will not men repair, when left to themselves, rather than come to Christ? To angels, to Mary, to saints real and saints imaginary, to consecrated relics and consecrated places, to holy water and holy wells, to long prayers and many prayers—to a variety of works, some of which are materially good and others materially evil—to stations, and pilgrimages, and mortifications, and horrid cruelties, and human sacrifices—in short, almost to any thing will men resort, as a ground of hope, except to the blood of Christ alone, and as a rule of life, except to the precepts of Christ alone. "Brethren, these things ought not so to be." Let right views of Mary's history, contrasted with the corruptions which have been ingrafted on it, put us on our guard against this spirit.

Finally. *As we have the opportunity, let us make it our habitual study to secure that greater blessedness of which our Lord here speaks.* We may be ready almost to envy those who had the honour to be allied to the Saviour, or the privilege of seeing and hearing him: but we need not; for, the advantages of which we are called to partake are far greater. It is the spiritual, and not any natural relation; it is the looking to Jesus with the eye of faith, and not with the eye of sense; it is his speaking to our hearts by his Holy Spirit, and not his speaking to our ears by his human voice, which can prove the means of conversion and edification. Those who were personally acquainted with him when on earth, were soon obliged to say: "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." But he is ever near to his people, in his saving

offices, as revealed in his word. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This word we are called on to hear and to keep. If we do not, God will require it of us; but, if we do, nothing more will be needful for our happiness. There will be no need for us to regret that we are of Gentile extraction, or that Jesus never trode our native soil, or that he left the world before we came into it. There will be no need for us to ask, with Thomas, to see the print of the nails, or the wound of the spear: for, interested in an ever-living and ever-present Redeemer, and accustomed from the very heart to address him as our Lord and our God, we shall have the blessedness of those who have not seen, and yet have believed, and we shall rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let us, therefore, seek to become partakers of this blessedness, if we have hitherto overlooked it; and let us hold it fast, if it be already our own. Thus shall we be more blessed than tongue can tell, or heart conceive. We shall be blessed in all our pious friends, blessed in all our religious privileges, blessed in all the height of our enjoyments, blessed in all the depth of our sorrows, blessed in life and in death. Nay, all this is but little in comparison of what a God of love will do; for, when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away; the song of our pilgrimage shall swell into the song of Zion, and the blessedness of time shall usher in the blessedness of eternity.

## LECTURE LX.

LUKE XI. 29-36.

“And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32. The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 33. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. 34. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.”

WE noticed, on a former occasion, that the 16th verse of this chapter was to be considered as the natural introduction to the 29th. The former is the demand, and the latter commences the answer to that demand; and they are brought close together in the parallel passage in the 12th chapter of Matthew, beginning at the 38th verse. In the 16th verse of this chapter, we read, “*And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.*” Matthew says, that “certain of the scribes and Pharisees” made this request. Dissatisfied with all the miracles he was working on the ground on which they were treading, they still desired something more, they presumed to dictate to him—they asked him to give them some sign, to show them some miracle, “from heaven,” from the clouds, some celestial appearance. Perhaps they might think they were excusable in making this proposal by the example of some of the Old Testament prophets. Moses, for instance, “stretched forth his rod towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground.” Joshua “said, in the sight of Israel, Sun,

stand thou still upon Gibeon; and, thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." "Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel." Elijah prayed, "and the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench;" and, on two different occasions, he called down fire from heaven to consume the company who came to apprehend him. Some of these examples may have occurred to the scribes and Pharisees. They, no doubt, also meant to affirm that such a sign would be much more convincing than any Jesus had shown. Now, testimony was given to the divine mission of Christ by various signs from heaven in this sense, both before and after the period here referred to: for example, by the miraculous appearances and voices at his birth and at his baptism—by the voice from heaven, like thunder—by the circumstances of his transfiguration—and by the darkness at his crucifixion. There was no want, therefore, even of such signs. But he would not allow caprice to dictate to him. Besides, why should any miraculous appearance from the sky have been more convincing than the miracles he was working on the ground? Would any thing of that kind have been such a triumph over Satan as the dispossession they had just witnessed, but with which they declared themselves dissatisfied? Suppose Jesus had immediately gratified their unreasonable demand, would they not still have had something to object? Might not the cavillers, who had already ascribed his miracles to Beelzebub, the chief of the devils, have said that he occasioned appearances in the clouds by connivance with the prince of the power of the air? When signs of this, or of any other kind, were demanded from wanton curiosity, or obstinate unbelief, or in order to tempt or try him, our Lord would not gratify any such useless and improper desires. Signs were granted, when they were asked in faith, for the confirmation of faith, to Abraham and Gideon; but they were justly denied to those who were prepared to look on their not being given as an apology for their unbelief.

Luke thus proceeds, in the 29th verse: "*And when*

*the people were gathered thick together,*" crowding round Jesus, probably, to see whether he would give a sign from heaven, "*he began to say, This is an evil generation.*" According to Matthew, he added the epithet "adulterous;" that is, they were a spurious and wicked race, as being greatly degenerated in character from what the descendants of Abraham ought to have been. When they said, "Abraham is our father," Jesus said unto them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." They were not at this time guilty of literal idolatry, which is commonly called adultery in the prophets, but they were guilty of unbelief and wilful sin, in various ways, and, therefore, they were not entitled to be considered as the children of God and of faithful Abraham. Their seeking such a sign, in such circumstances, was a proof that such was their character. Our Lord declared that "*no sign,*" of the kind they then so unreasonably demanded, should "*be given,*" to that evil and degenerated race. He went on, however, afterwards to work more miracles similar to those which he had already wrought: and he intimated that another sign would be given them, of a different nature, namely, his own resurrection, which, being attended with the appearance of a descending angel, was a sign from heaven. This he here designates as "*the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas*" (says he) "*was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation:*" and the meaning is here fully brought out, in those additional words recorded by Matthew,\* "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Observe how exactly the type and the antitype here correspond. Jonah, being cast into the sea, in order to save the lives of many others who were in danger of perishing in the storm, was received into the whale's belly, or rather, into the belly of a great fish, which he calls "the belly of hell," or of the grave: so, Jesus Christ, being put to death to save sinners from perishing for ever, was laid in the dark sepulchre. Jonah, in that dismal situation, comforted himself with the hope of deliverance, and looked again towards God's holy temple: so, it is said that Christ's heart rejoiced, and his flesh rested in hope, because God would not leave his soul in hell—would not leave him in the grave, or state of the dead, neither would

\* Matt. xii. 40.

suffer him, who was his Holy One, to see corruption. Jonah was delivered from his imprisonment, and brought safe to dry land: so Jesus was set free from the prison of the grave; God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish: so Jesus was the very same length of time in the heart of the earth. As our Lord was crucified on the day we call Friday, and rose on the first day of the week, which is the Christian sabbath, the time he lay in the grave included part of the day on which he was crucified, the whole of the following night, the whole of the second day and of the second night, and part of the third day. Thus, counting inclusively, or taking in the two extremes, we should naturally say, in English, that he was three days in the grave. As to the expression, three days and three nights, that is a Hebrew form of expression meaning no longer space of time than what has just been stated. Our word day is put sometimes for the day as distinguished from the night, and sometimes for the natural day of twenty-four hours. But, as there is no one word in the Hebrew language which conveys the idea of a space of twenty-four hours, the Jews were obliged to use the words "a day and a night." Hence, their saying that any thing happened after three days and three nights, as the literal rendering would be, was the same as if we said that it happened on the third day. This Hebraism, or Hebrew form of expression, would be used by Matthew, whether he had written in Hebrew or in Greek; for, it was a common practice to transfer an idiom from the former language into the latter. We have a proof that this was the Jewish mode of speaking, in the Book of Esther: "Fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night and day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the king." Accordingly, it is said, that she went in "on the third day." And to complete the parallel, the type and the anti-type corresponded in this, that as Jonah, after his deliverance, went and preached to the Ninevites, saying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed;" so Jesus Christ, after his resurrection, remained on earth forty days, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

This then, namely, his own resurrection, was the sign to which our Lord referred these captious people. It adds, also, to the importance to be attached to this, that he replied



in the same way on another similar occasion, as we read at the beginning of the 16th chapter of Matthew. This sign, his miracle, actually took place, as foretold, in all its circumstances. And to this miracle the inspired preachers and writers were accustomed to refer, as the great proof of the Saviour's divine mission. Thus, we find Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, dwelling on Jesus' resurrection and ascension as the grand evidence to let "all the house of Israel know assuredly that God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ;" and Paul teaching the Romans that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

What now (that we may not find it necessary to return to this first topic in the passage before us) is the improvement we should make of these two verses? Let us all beware of the fastidious and insatiable spirit as to evidence, which these unbelieving Jews here displayed. Unreasonable as the spirit was in them, it would be still more so in us now. It is natural to proud and suspicious men to prescribe to God what he should do; and then, if he do not proceed exactly as they have dictated, to make that an excuse for their unbelief and ungodliness. The evidence actually given of the truth of Christianity is more varied and more strong than could previously have been conceived; yet will sceptics pretend that there should have been more. There is abundance to satisfy every honest mind: and those who resist it, let them think as highly of themselves, or be as much applauded by others, as they may, are "an evil generation." Let us, then, "all beware, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief." Let us study all the evidences of the Gospel, and especially, the crowning evidence of the resurrection of Christ. Let us not expect, or desire, any more miracles, or more inspiration now; but let us follow up the miracles which God has already wrought, and the information he has already given. Instead of asking more evidence and more information, let us turn our undivided attention to the evidence and information furnished in the perfect Word of God, and pray for grace to enable us to understand, believe, and obey it. If the means we already enjoy do not suffice to bring us to faith and repentance, no other would. "If we believe not Moses and the prophets," and, we may now add, Christ and the apostles, "neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

We shall next consider the 32d verse, which has a more immediate connexion with the type of Jonas than what is stated in the 31st verse: indeed, this is the order in which the subjects are introduced by Matthew.\* “*The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*” From speaking of Jonah as a type, it was a natural transition to speak of Jonah as a preacher. The effect of his preaching is described in his 3d chapter, from the 5th verse to the end. “So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” Thus, the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas; but the Jews did not repent at the preaching of Jesus Christ, though a greater than Jonas was there. Even as a man, Jesus was greater than Jonas, being perfectly holy. As a prophet, too, Jesus was greater than Jonas; for he was the chief of the prophets, even the Messiah. And as to his divine nature, no comparison could be drawn; for he was the Son of God, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person. His preaching, too, was more powerful than that of Jonas, and the ruin he threatened was more terrible than the overthrow of a city. Still, the Jews, as a body, received him not, therefore, said he, “The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn it.” Even then, the consideration of the repentance of the Ninevites in far less favourable circumstances, exposed the very aggravated nature of the impenitence of the Jews in the

Matt. xii. 41, 42.

midst of all their advantages. And looking forward to the last day, when all nations were to stand before the judgment-seat of God, our Lord declared that, like what is said to find persons guilty by witnesses who stand up to give evidence before an earthly tribunal, the very appearance of the penitent Ninevites, whether they actually uttered any thing or not, would be equivalent to an accusing voice. Indeed, persons may be said to condemn others, who in any way furnish matter and argument for their condemnation.

But, to apply this to ourselves—will not the men of Nineveh rise up in the judgment with us, and condemn us, if we continue unbelieving and impenitent? How much greater are our privileges than theirs were! If that heathen people, who had neither Moses nor Christ, who appear to have had only one preacher, and who had only a peradventure of safety to encourage them, turned at the voice which threatened temporal calamities: how inexcusable shall we be, who, in this country and this age, have both the law and the gospel, who have many preachers of righteousness, who have positive assurance of pardon, on turning to the Lord—how inexcusable shall we be, if we disregard such means of happiness, and obstinately rush on endless ruin! Let us think of the Ninevites now, and let us remember that we shall be confronted with them in the day of judgment. Let us think, too, how the Lord is speaking to us by the effects of his preached gospel in other places. Let us think of the converts who are making in the South Seas, in India, in Africa, and in other heathen lands, and of their exemplary demeanour; and let us beware lest, by our rejection of the light, we have reason to blush here, and lest we give occasion to them to stand up as witnesses against us hereafter. Let us practically remember the words of inspiration, “I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

To the same purpose, though by reference to a different part of the Old Testament history, our Lord says, in the 31st verse, “*The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them; for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is*

*here.*" The account here referred to is in 1 Kings x. 1, &c. "And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty: so she turned, and went to her own country, she and her servants."

The country here called Sheba is thought, by some, to have been the same with Ethiopia, in Africa: but there is better authority for considering it to have been a part of Arabia Felix, in Asia. This lay to the south, or south-east, of Jerusalem: and it might be called "the utmost parts of the earth," as it lay at a great distance from Jerusalem, as it bordered on the ocean, and was the extremity of the land in that direction, and also, as the Jews, at that time, knew of no land beyond it. Our Lord here declares that, as the penitent Ninevites, so the inquiring queen of Sheba, would condemn the obstinate Jews, to whom he addressed himself. She came from a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solo-

mon, and carefully profited by it; whereas they, while they had Jesus preaching in the midst of them, were rejecting his instructions. The contrast furnished matter for their condemnation, especially when the superiority of Jesus to Solomon was taken into view. Though generally sparing in stating his own just claims, it was necessary that he should, on some occasions, speak out, as he did now. To omit every other consideration, he was greater than Solomon in respect of wisdom, for he knew all things. His wisdom was underrived; he was the wisdom of God—wisdom itself. When we consider, on the one hand, that Solomon was an exceedingly rich and powerful monarch, and so wise, that there were none like him, either before or after him; and on the other, that Christ, notwithstanding all his humiliation, was “greater than Solomon,”\* is not this a plain proof that Christ was more than man? that he was “God over all, blessed for ever?” In him were “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” and “he spake as never man spake.” How inexcusable, then, were the Jews, in refusing to listen to him!

But this was also spoken for our admonition. Will not the queen of Sheba rise up in the judgment, and condemn those among us, who, amid all the facilities they enjoy, neglect the wisdom from above? The things which the Saviour spoke, the refusing to listen to which rendered the Jews so inexcusable, are written in Scripture, that the reading and preaching of them may make us wise unto salvation. There is, therefore, no outward difficulty in the way of coming to the knowledge of them. How does the conduct of the queen of Sheba, who came from so great a distance, and took so much pains to learn the wisdom of Solomon, condemn those among us who peruse not the Word of God, which contains a perfect revelation of the way of life, and which they probably have lying neglected in their own houses; or who absent themselves without cause from the house of God, which is near to them, and in which the way of life is proclaimed; or who, when present in his house, give no heed to the things which they hear, and from prejudice, or carelessness, continue in ignorance, in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity! Consider this, you who are neglecting the wisdom of God which is brought to

\* A greater, *πλεον*, something greater than Solomon, and a greater than Jonas. Classic authors frequently use the neuter gender in this way, when speaking of persons; and this is reckoned an elegance.

*Nil oriturum alias, nil ortum tale fatentes.—Horace.*

your very door, nay, which is now sounding in your ears. You have not, like the queen of the south, to undergo the fatigue, expense, and danger, of a long journey, in order to get within the means of grace, but they abound where your lot is cast. The blessings of salvation are brought near, and freely offered to you. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." A greater than Solomon is here still, even the Lord Jesus Christ—a greater in himself, a greater in the substance of his teaching, and a greater in the certainty and power with which he instructs. He can do much more than Solomon, for he can give you real saving wisdom—he can open your understanding. If, then, you are conscious that you lack wisdom, ask of God, who giveth liberally to all who ask, and who upbraideth not; and it shall be given you. It will not, indeed, be wise for you to spend your time, when you apply to him, in putting such "hard questions" as do not concern your salvation: but, however difficult any subjects may be that relate distinctly to your safety, holiness, and comfort, if you propose them to him by reading his Word, waiting on his ordinances, improving the knowledge you already have, and praying to him for more full instruction, he will cause you to understand them all, in as far as is necessary. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto you as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

Let those of you who have derived any sanctified wisdom from Christ, seek more and more of it. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Contrive to bring your difficulties to him, and he will solve them for you. See, in Solomon, a beautiful, though certainly an inadequate, emblem of the glory of your Redeemer; and be gratified to think how the typical history of David's immediate son has been fulfilled, is fulfilling, and will be completely fulfilled, in him who is also the Son of David, but who is at the same time David's Lord. Accustom your-

selves to look through the type to the antitype, when you sing, as in the 72d Psalm, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son."—"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts."—"And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." Fulfilled, in part, in the gifts presented by the wise men of the East, and in the partial success of the gospel, these predictions wait for their complete fulfilment in the establishment of his universal kingdom. Be it yours now to admire, and praise, and obey him. You are to be congratulated who spiritually partake of "the meat of his table," and take delight in "the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers." Happy are ye his people, and happy are ye his servants, who stand continually before him, and hear his wisdom. Blessed are ye that dwell in his house, for ye will be still praising him. Bring presents to this King. Pour them out, and spare not. Give him all you can, give him your hearts, give him all you have, and all you are. You will be gainers by this; for he will give you, of his royal bounty, all you desire, and much more. He will do for you exceedingly abundantly above all that you ask or think. From listening to his wisdom, and enjoying his fellowship in his house below, return with cheerfulness and increased devotedness to serve him in your own place in society; and look forward to the time when you shall be admitted to dwell with him at his court above, and find, more than ever, that the report of his glory was a true report, nay, that the half had not been told you.

Verse 33: "*No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light.*" We had very nearly the same words, in the 16th verse of the 9th chapter of this Gospel; and, in both places, the literal sense is too plain to require any illustration. The words, however, appear to be introduced with a different view on this occasion; for, whereas they were plainly spoken formerly in explanation of the conduct Christ expected of his followers, they seem here spoken to declare the conduct he was to pursue himself. If we are to refer them to what goes before, as seems proper, the exact bond of connexion may be this: Though the Pharisees had displayed the greatest perversity in their unbelief, impenitence, and rejection of the wisdom which he taught, he was by no means, on that account, to

desist from his work, but was to persevere in prosecuting his ministry in the same way; for he was like a candle or lamp, which, once lighted, was not to be hid, but to be kept in a conspicuous place, and thus, as he had formerly exhorted his disciples, he himself was to take every opportunity of making known and recommending the truth. He is often represented as the Light of the world. "John was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light; that was the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "I am the light of the world," said Christ, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Accordingly, our Lord went on to preach and to work miracles, though not according to the dictation of the Pharisees, yet in the way that seemed best to himself; and thus, the light of his ministry diffused itself distinctly throughout Judea. In obedience to his command, also, his apostles proceeded, after his death, to diffuse the light still more extensively. He has ordered that the gospel shall be preached to every creature under heaven: and he will be at last, in the most complete and most extensive sense of the words, "a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel."

But to come to ourselves—this light has reached to us. We, a people who sat in darkness, have seen the great light; and to us who sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up. The light is not put into a secret place, nor under a bushel; but it is held up to the view of us all. The call is given in public, and aloud. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse." Is it not a great privilege to have this public warning, and this clear light? Let us consider what we are, and whither we are going. Jesus is, as it were, still saying to us, "Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

The three concluding verses run thus: "*The light of the body is the eye: therefore, when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body, therefore, be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give*



*thee light.*" In connexion with what our Lord had said just before, he here goes on to say, that it is necessary for men to have sight, as well as light. Be an object ever so interesting, and the light ever so bright, all will be to no purpose, if the faculty of vision be wanting, or essentially defective. Now, these verses, in which Christ pursues this idea, are to be taken both literally and metaphorically.

Literally, or at least in relation to bodily sight, "the light of the body is the eye." The light is generally used, either for that which gives light—the luminous body, such as the sun, or a lamp; or, for that which, emanating from the luminous body, enables us to see objects: in this clause, however, it is put for the organ of vision. Or, if we invert the order of the words, "The eye is the light," or lamp "of the body."

"When thine eye is single"—the word rendered single, strictly speaking, denotes that which is one in respect of number, or simple and uncompounded in respect of substance. As applied to the eye-sight, it signifies that it is clear, free from organic defects and vicious humours; in other words, that it is so perfect in structure and action, as to see objects, not dimly, nor confusedly, nor doubly, nor in a different size, or place, or colour from reality, but distinctly, and, in every respect, exactly as they are. In such a state, the eye-sight is said, in a single word, to be good. When thine eye is thus single, "thy whole body also is full of light"—thou art completely enlightened in the literal sense, and able to go about, and to conduct all bodily and outward affairs, with safety and correctness. "Every object within the reach of the eye is then as distinctly seen as if there were an eye in every part. So the eye is to every part of the body what the lamp is to every part of the house,"\* or room, when its bright shining gives light.

But, on the other hand, when the "eye is evil," that is, when the eye-sight is the reverse of single, or clear, or good; if the eye-sight be distempered, or, as we usually say, bad; in proportion to its deficiency will a man be involved in obscurity, and exposed to form erroneous ideas of external objects. No other part can supply the defect of the eye. And, if the eye-sight be totally and permanently gone, or altogether interrupted for a time, a man is left in utter darkness, the same as if there were no light shining around him at all, the same at mid-day as at midnight. It concerns a

\* Dr A. Clarke.

man, also, to "take heed lest the light that is in him be not darkness"—lest when he imagines he sees correctly, his vision be deceiving him; for, in such a situation, he would be ready to go on heedlessly, and would be in greater danger than if he had to grope his way with care in a state of conscious blindness.

When we turn next to the interpretation of these verses in the metaphorical or figurative sense, we find them fraught with deep and important instruction. If we put the understanding instead of the eye, and the soul instead of the body, we have at once the key to the spiritual meaning. We then say, taking the understanding in the most enlarged sense, and as including thought, reasoning, and conscience, the light, or the eye, of the soul, is the understanding. What light is to the body, that knowledge is to the soul; and as the eye is the organ by which light is received for the guidance of the body, so the understanding is the faculty by which knowledge is received for the guidance of the soul. Therefore, also, when the understanding is single, that is, clear, sound—sound in itself, and sound in its actual exercise on the subject of religion, correctly apprehending and really receiving gospel truth—then the whole soul is full of light; the truth influences the whole sentiments, affections, and conduct.

But when the understanding is evil, when it is unsound, when it is warped by prejudice or passion, and when it thus leads to false conclusions, the soul is full of darkness—is in a state of spiritual ignorance, error, and depravity. It concerns a man, therefore, to take heed that the light that is in his soul be not darkness—that the principles he has adopted be not erroneous; for, if they be, he is more ready to go far astray in that state of fancied illumination, than if he were brought to a stand in conscious ignorance; and the more steadily and extensively he follows out these false principles, the farther he wanders from truth and duty into the mazes of delusion and wickedness.

Our Lord concludes with the idea, that when the whole soul is full of light, so as to have no dark corner in it—when it is correctly and thoroughly instructed, that is a most pleasant and desirable state, somewhat like that of being in an apartment which is thoroughly illuminated by a very bright candle or lamp.

As to the application of these last verses to ourselves:—While, as already noticed, we have the light of gospel sal-

vation shining in great brilliancy around us, let us beware lest something voluntarily and culpably deficient in our mental vision prevent that light from shining into our hearts. Our bodily eye-sight, whether good or bad, is generally independent on the state of our hearts; but it is quite otherwise with our spiritual discernment, for here our wishes and aversions have a mighty influence, and there is room and need for exhortation and exertion. Let us beware lest, in this sense, our eye be evil, and the light that is in us be no better than darkness. A man's light is darkness when he is in radical error, and when what he reckons his chief wisdom is absolute folly. And here, let me put you on your guard against some of the multifarious causes of prevalent and fatal darkness in the midst of real outward and imaginary inward light.

Take heed of the great leading *error of the worldly*, who, in their practical judgment, prefer earthly to heavenly things, and thus are involved in spiritual darkness. Take eternity into account, if you would estimate things according to their real value, and would think and act as well-informed persons.

Take heed of *shutting your eyes* altogether against the light, of averting your thoughts altogether from the truth, and of resolving to persist wilfully in ignorance. There are none so blind as those who will not see.

Take heed of *leaning to your own understanding*. There are some persons, who, being naturally uncommonly sagacious, or who fancying themselves so, are so wrapped up in self-conceit, as to undervalue the true light. Take heed of trusting in human learning, if you have had an opportunity of becoming learned. It is very melancholy that there are so many who rest in this to the neglect of the wisdom which is from above. Take heed of infidel and irreligious philosophy, falsely called philosophy: "Beware lest any spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Reason is a noble endowment, and its right exercise is incumbent, but there are false reasonings of which you should be aware. There are specious arguments by which men put light for darkness, and darkness for light, and by which, when they are led astray, there is nothing too unreasonable for them to be guilty of, even to the total rejection of the gospel.

Take heed of the pride of *self-righteousness*; for, it will

blind you to your own demerit, and to the glory of Christ's finished work, and to the way of pardon and acceptance by faith alone. It will cause you to think that you are spiritually rich, and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing, not knowing that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

"Take heed and beware of *covetousness*," for it perverts the judgment and the affections. The love of money causes many "to err from the faith."

Take heed of the *love of sin* in general, and the indulgence of any particular sin. There can be no doubt that the love of sin exerts a fatal influence in perverting the understanding, and keeping men in darkness. There are many who "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." If, therefore, you would have the true light illuminating your soul, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

Take heed of a spirit of *envy, malice, and uncharitableness*. This is called in Scripture an evil eye: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" said our Lord. The indulgence of this spirit shows that the true light has not entered the soul, and tends still to keep it out. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him: but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

Take heed of unfounded *prejudice and partiality*: such a bias will lead you astray, and render your understanding as incapable of judging of truth as a jaundiced eye is of colours. Take heed of every sinister end, every improper design. This is, perhaps, peculiarly intended by an "evil eye." See that you have an honest, sincere, upright, single design. Let your aim be the glory of God, in the way of your own salvation. Hypocrisy and duplicity must ruin both a man's principles and character.

Beware of the *delusions of Satan*, who seeks to keep you in darkness. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

And take heed of *not acting up to the light* you have re-

ceived, for that is a sure way of relapsing into darkness. When those who "knew God glorified him not as God," "they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Beware of all these things, else it will be said of you that "the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." Beware of all these things, lest you hear and not understand, and see but not perceive, and lest God, in righteous judgment, send you "strong delusion, to believe a lie." How dreadful if such your end! Think timeously of your danger. "Come forth, ye blind people that have eyes, and ye deaf that have ears."—"Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Study to be open to conviction. Read and hear the Word with humility and submission. Earnestly and perseveringly pray for the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. "And may he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Finally. If God has given us any degree of that singleness of eye which admits the light of life into the soul, let us *improve that light and welcome it more and more*. Once darkness, but now light in the Lord, let us walk as children of the light. Let us act with a simplicity of holy intention; and let us "eat our meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Sensible, too, of the dimness of our best views, let us use all the means in our power to get them cleared up; and especially, let us wait on the Lord, and beseech him to guide us by his Spirit into all truth. Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift! open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Dissipate every cloud, take away every film, which would shut out the sight of thee. O brightness of thy Father's glory, who from thy throne far above the cherubim, seest all the secrets of the great deep! thou true enlivening, unexhausted light, which angels long to be illuminated with, and spend glad ages in beholding! spring forth into our souls, and scatter the thick darkness there, that the brightness of thy love may shine and shed itself through every corner of our benighted hearts.\* Amen.

\* Augustine's *Meditations*, chap. xviii.

## LECTURE LXI.

## LUKE XI. 37-44.

“And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. 38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. 40. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? 41. But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. 42. But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 43. Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. 44. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.”

As Luke is the only evangelist who relates the visit our Lord now paid in the house of this Pharisee, we know nothing of the man's character, or of the circumstances of the visit, beyond what may be gathered from this one account. We read, however, of the same objection which is here mentioned being raised against Christ and his disciples, and of his making similar statements in reply, on other occasions, to which it will be of use to advert.

This account is introduced with the words, “*And as he spake.*” It is the opinion of harmonizers of the Gospel history, that this occurrence is not to be considered as introduced here in the exact order of time: therefore, the words, “as he spake,” do not refer us to what goes immediately before, but merely intimate that what is about to be mentioned took place on one occasion as Jesus was speaking. While he was yet engaged in teaching the people, “*a certain Pharisee*” came forward, and “*besought,*” or rather invited, “*him to dine with him.*” The Jews, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, had but two meals in the day—the one (to use the Greek words, for we have no English words altogether corresponding to them) was the *ariston*, which is rendered dinner, and the other the *deipnon*, which is ren-

dered supper. They are both mentioned, Luke xiv. 12. "When thou makest a dinner, or a supper." Their *ariston*, however, corresponded as nearly to what we call breakfast, as to what we call dinner. The word literally signifies, "the first meat." Josephus says\* that the legal hour of the *ariston*, on the Sabbath, was the sixth hour; that is, twelve o'clock at noon, according to our way of reckoning: and, though he does not mention the usual hour on other days, it was probably much the same. Speaking of his brethren,† Joseph said, in Egypt: "These men shall dine," or eat "with me at noon." Their *deipnon*, which is rendered "supper," was their chief meal. But, though the hour of it, no doubt, varied, it was by no means so late as our word supper might suggest, being eaten early in the evening, or after the heat of the day.

While our Lord was speaking, the Pharisee besought him to dine with him, it being the usual hour of dinner. Whatever may have been the motive which led the Pharisee to give the invitation, whether it proceeded from true hospitality and a real regard for Christ, or (as appears more probable when we consider the way in which our Lord conducted himself), from a desire to watch and ensnare him, our Lord accepted the invitation; probably, both that he might get that bodily refreshment of which he, at the time, stood in need, and that he might have an opportunity of being useful: and it was the Pharisee's own fault, if the visit, with which he was honoured, did not issue in his spiritual benefit. Jesus "*went in*," and immediately "*sat down to meat*," without washing his hands, according to the custom of the Pharisees—for which, no doubt, every convenience was provided.

"*And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.*" He wondered inwardly, if he did not express his wonder in words, that a ceremony, which he considered so essential, was neglected by one who bore so high a reputation for religion. Due attention to cleanliness in every respect is very agreeable and commendable, and ought by no means to be neglected. But the Pharisees carried the custom of washing much farther than was necessary for the purpose of cleanliness, looking on it as a religious ceremony, and practising it with superstitious frequency. The most particular account of their practice in this respect, in Scripture, is thus given in the beginning of

\* Life, sect. 54.

† Gen. xliii. 16.

the 7th chapter of Mark: "Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say, with unwashen) hands," without washing their hands immediately before, "they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft," or, as some think the meaning is, with the fist, or up to the wrist, and with great care, "eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables," or couches, even though they be perfectly clean. "Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread" (take their food) "with unwashen hands?" Ablution was, indeed, prescribed by the law of Moses, for doing away ceremonial uncleanness in certain cases; but that law contained no such injunctions as those here referred to. The Pharisees, therefore, and other Jews who followed them, rested the custom on the authority, not of the written law of Moses, but of the tradition of the elders. It was pretended that, at the same time when the written law was given by Moses, many other things additional and explanatory were revealed to him, which he did not commit to writing, but delivered orally to the elders, who handed them down, in the same way, from one generation to another. It was not till long after the time of Christ, that these traditions were committed to writing. At last, however, in order to prevent them from being lost in the dispersion of the nation, they were collected in what is called the Talmud. There are two works that bear this name—the Talmud of Jerusalem, and the Talmud of Babylon. Each consists of two parts—the one called the Mishna, which is the text; and the other the Gemara, which is the commentary on the text. The Jewish rabbies made the Talmud more a study than the sacred books; and dared to pronounce it of equal, nay, of superior authority. "The words of the scribes," said they, "are lovely above the words of the law, and more weighty than the words of the law, or the prophets."\* A similar misplaced regard was given to the unwritten traditions, in the days of our Lord. He accused them, as we read in

\* Lightfoot and Whitby. The Talmud was printed at Amsterdam in twelve volumes folio.



the 15th chapter of Matthew and the 7th chapter of Mark, of "transgressing the commandment of God," and "making it of none effect" by their traditions—of "rejecting the commandment of God, that they might keep their own traditions." And he gives a striking example of this, in that, while the law of God required children to reverence and assist their parents, and denounced the punishment of death on every child that should curse his father or mother, the absurd and wicked principle of the Jewish tradition relating to the positive obligation of all vows, secured the culprit in this way from punishment, and relieved him from all obligation to assist his destitute parents, if he had bound up his substance by a vow.

With regard to the traditionary custom of the needless, ceremonial washing before meat, the Pharisees considered it as a necessary and very efficacious rite, the neglect of which was most criminal. The Talmud declares that to eat bread with unwashed hands, is as bad as to break the seventh commandment. There is an account of one rabbi being excommunicated by the Sanhedrim, because he contemned this custom: and of another rabbi, who, "being in prison, and not having water enough both to drink and to wash his hands, chose to do the latter, saying, It is better to die with thirst, than transgress the tradition of the elders." In fact, too many of the Jews placed the observance of this and some other ceremonies, which were either entirely of human invention, or perverted from the purpose for which they were divinely appointed, in the room of pardon through the Messiah, regeneration by the Spirit, and true holiness of heart and life, and thought that nothing more than these ceremonies was necessary to salvation. It is said that they were taught, and believed, as follows:—"Whosoever hath his seat in the land of Israel, and eateth his common food in cleanness, and recites his phylacteries morning and evening, let him be confident that he shall obtain the life of the world to come."\* You see, then, the hurtful effects of such a ceremony as this, when put in the place of true religion, and when enforced as binding on the conscience, though of mere human invention. Had this been a harmless custom, and left to be observed or not, as men pleased, our Lord might not have seen it proper to be in any way singular with regard to it: but when it usurped the place of a divine institution, and was put instead of deliverance from the

\* Whitby on Mark vii.

guilt and pollution of sin, he would not countenance any such superstition.

Nay, he not only refused to comply with it himself, but administered a sharp rebuke to those who did. Not prevented by mistaken complaisance, he said to his host, with all faithfulness, "*Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and uncleanness.*" He would not be reckoned a cleanly servant who should attend to the outside of the cup his master drinks out of, and of the plate he eats his meat out of, but neglect to cleanse their inside: as little could they be reckoned spiritually clean, who attended merely to washings of hands and outward ceremonies, while they neglected the state of their hearts, continued under the guilt and pollution of sin, more particularly, were guilty of "ravening," or rapaciousness, or extortion, "and wickedness," or malice, for which vices many of the Pharisees were notorious. In the similar passage in Matt. xxiii. 25, our Lord said that they were "full of extortion and excess." They were careful to wash their hands before their meat, and to eat and drink out of newly cleaned vessels; but they made no scruple of seizing with guilty hands what procured their meat and drink, and then using them to excess. They contrived to maintain some reputation for sanctity, and to avoid gross sins in the sight of men; but they indulged inward iniquity, which rendered them abominable in the sight of God. In opposition to this mode of procedure, our Lord, according to Matthew, gave this direction, "Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also;" that is, as applied in the figurative sense, men ought to begin with purification of heart; for, if the heart be renewed and sanctified by grace, and brought under the regulation of proper principles, the life will be reformed of course. Out of the heart are the issues of life. When the fountain is pure, so are the streams. And, when the state and the motives are good, the outward actions are not only apparently good, but really good, and acceptable to God.

But, to proceed with the exposition of the passage immediately before us: "*Ye fools!*" (for how inconsiderate and foolish were they in this!)"—"did not he that made that which is without," or the body, "*make that which is within also,*" or the soul? He formed man's body out of the dust of the ground, and also breathed into his nostrils the breath

of life, so that he became a living soul. God is called the "Father of our spirits," "the Lord who stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." Now, from the fact of his being the Creator of the whole man, the Pharisees should have inferred, and remembered, that he knew all that was in man. "Understand, ye brutish among the people," says the Psalmist; "and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"—"The Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance" only, "but the Lord looketh on the heart." Whatever fair appearances, therefore, these Pharisees might have presented, the Lord could not but be much displeased, when he beheld the secret abominations of heart which they cherished. Hence, they should have concluded that, if they wished to be accepted of him, it was necessary for them to undergo an inward purification, and to cultivate the various graces, and discharge the various duties, of true religion and morality.

One of these duties our Lord particularly mentions, namely, that of charity. "*But rather give alms of such things as ye have.*"\* He had just been accusing them of ravening, or extortion; of oppressing the poor, to enrich themselves; and now, rather than that, or instead of that, he inculcates kindness to the poor by alms-giving. Immediate and direct restitution would be their duty in all cases where the extortion they had practised could be particularly ascertained; and where that could not be, the best way of disposing of their ill-gotten gain was to give it to the poor. But, however justly property may come to a man,

\* Πλην τα ινοντα δοτι ιλημοσυνην. Τα ινοντα, "quæ insunt—those things which are in, or within." Raphelius, adhering very rigidly to the literal idea, has an elaborate note to show that this is an injunction to give of the drink and food which are in the cup and platter; and it is possible that this may be the exact meaning: yet even on this interpretation, this would amount to an expression, in a limited way, of what our English version expresses in a general way. Others are for rendering the phrase, "quod superest," or, "quæ supersunt—those things which are over, or remain," after what is necessary for yourselves. Some (among whom are Bos, Schleusner, and Doddridge) think that τα ινοντα is for κατα τα ινοντα, according to such things as are present, or as you have; in other words, in proportion to your substance; τα ινοντα being, as they think, the same with τα παροντα, or, τα παριχοντα. On the whole, our version seems a good one—"Such things as you have," or, as are in your power.

alms-giving must not be neglected. "Give alms of such things as ye have; *and, behold, all things are clean unto you.*" We cannot suppose that our Lord meant, by this saying, to teach that alms-giving was meritorious, or, in any sense, efficacious, to remove the guilt, or the pollution of sin: that would be to subvert the whole scheme of the Gospel. But he here teaches that such charity is an inseparable accompaniment, and a necessary characteristic and proof of cleanliness—that is, of a state of spiritual purity, or holiness; and also that such an appropriation of part of a man's substance is essential to his rightful and pious enjoyment of the remainder. As applied to meats, the word "clean" signified to a Jew that they might be lawfully used. And it is probable that, in addition to a general reference of this kind, our Lord here alluded more particularly to the laws of the first-fruits, and of the tithes. The Jews were enjoined to present a basket of the first ripe fruits solemnly to the Lord, and also to give a tithe, or tenth part, of their increase to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; and it was in so doing that the remainder was clean to them, and that they proceeded by divine right, and could expect the divine blessing in the use of it.\* So, it holds in principle universally, that men ought to acknowledge distinctly their obligation to God for all they have, both by thanksgiving in words, and distribution in almsgiving. Wherever this is done by renewed persons, from true scriptural motives, there, there is true purity; wherever this is neglected, or gone about hypocritically, there, there is nothing but impurity. "Unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but, even their mind and conscience are defiled." God's believing, pardoned, and renewed people have the sanctified use of all things; but the unbelieving and impenitent are sinning, even when they imagine that they are serving God; and whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do in common life, they only pollute and profane everything they taste or touch.

Aware how little the Pharisees were inclined to follow the excellent advice which he had just given them, our Lord proceeded faithfully to warn them of their danger. "*Woe unto you, Pharisees!*" The wrath of God was suspended over them, and would soon bring on them the most awful misery, unless they repented. "Woe unto you, Pharisees!

\* Deut. xxvi.

*for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God."* They were scrupulous in paying the tithe, even of the most trifling garden herbs, in order to obtain the reputation of conscientiousness and sanctity with the priests and the people, and foolishly supposing thereby to recommend themselves to the divine favour; while they neglected the practice of righteous judgment to their fellow-creatures, the exercise of love to their Creator, and, indeed, all the weightier matters of duty, as if they had been unnecessary. But does our Lord condemn them for this exactness in these smaller matters? He does not. "*These,*" namely, the more important duties, "*ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*" They were expressly enjoined to give the tithe of all the increase of their land; and, therefore, exactness in this respect was commendable. And so, universally, nothing that God hath commanded should be neglected, under the pretence of its being of small importance. Every duty, be it what it may, acquires importance from the very circumstance of its being a duty—of its being divinely enjoined; the observance of it, from right motives, is an honouring, and the neglect of it is a despising of the great Lawgiver. In the words of Jesus, "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." In attending, however, to comparatively minute things, men ought to take care that they be really enjoined by God; for, we must notice that this saying of Christ's was intended to apply only to tithing, which was enjoined, and not to superstitious and unauthorized washings, for these he neither observed himself, nor approved in others. Great tenderness of conscience, in reference to things commanded by God, is, as far as it goes, a favourable symptom: in reference, however, to things imposed on men by human authority, or by their own wayward imaginations, it is a cruel bondage, and a dangerous snare. But, if even the most minute matters which rest on a divine command, are to be carefully attended to, how much more evident is it that the comparatively weighty matters, which rest on the same foundation, are imperatively binding! and how plainly did the Pharisees' neglect of the great

duties of justice, mercy, and the love of God, prove that their scrupulosity in the affair of tithes was not the result of a truly good conscience, but either the partial working of a deluding superstition, or the mere acting of a part to serve some sinister purpose! Their great care to avoid the slightest ceremonial offence, while they committed the most heinous crimes without scruple, is illustrated by our Lord, according to Matthew, by the proverbial expression of "straining at" or rather, straining out "a gnat, and swallowing a camel."

Our Lord goes on to denounce another woe on the Pharisees, because of their pride. "*Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues.*" Such affectation of superiority was very unbecoming in any place, but especially in the synagogues, in the places of worship, in the places where they were assembled to humble themselves before the great God of heaven, who hath made all men of one blood, who will have them all to look on each other as brethren, and who declares that "he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." It was not the actual possession of the most honourable places that Christ condemned, for they must have been possessed by some persons; but it was loving them, greatly desiring them, claiming them, and valuing themselves upon them. The Pharisees loved also "*greetings in the markets.*" They loved, coveted, pompous salutations in the most public places, where the greatest number of people could witness the honour done to them. They loved to be saluted with the title of Rabbi, which was expressive of very high honour to them as teachers, with almost, if not altogether, absolute authority and infallibility, and which was exceptionable as lately introduced, and as implying undue superiority. "But be not ye called Rabbi," said he elsewhere, "for one is your master, even Christ." To show all due respect to teachers and other superiors is commendable; but the usurpation of human authority and of lordship over the opinions and conduct of men, ought neither to be attempted nor submitted to.

Once more, our Lord denounces a woe on the Pharisees, joining, however, with them the scribes or lawyers—that is, the expounders of the law, some of whom were of the sect of the Pharisees, and too many of whom closely resembled them in the worst traits of their character; and as he had before virtually charged, so he now expressly charges them with the sin of hypocrisy. "*Woe unto you, scribes and*

*Pharisees, hypocrites!"* A hypocrite is one who pretends to be what he is not; one who acts a part as under a mask; one who seems, in words and actions, to be quite a different character from what he is at heart. This was peculiarly characteristic of most of the scribes and Pharisees, who were attentive to outward appearances, but neglected the state of their souls, and who did "all their works to be seen of men." "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! *for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.*" On that other occasion, in the 23d chapter of Matthew already referred to, Christ illustrated their hypocrisy, in a somewhat different way. "Woe unto you," said he, "for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." When the sepulchres were above ground, as many of them were, the Jews were accustomed to whitewash them, or otherwise ornament them, and render them conspicuous, in part, perhaps, from the natural desire that the places where their dead lay should be respected, but chiefly from a care that none might contract ceremonial pollution by touching them. In Numb. xix. 16, it is enacted that "whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days." A sepulchre thus whitened, yet containing the corrupting dead, was an apt emblem of the ostentatious display and real depravity which Christ was rebuking. But whereas, on that occasion, he drew the comparison from those sepulchres which were very conspicuous, on this he draws it from graves which appeared not, which were not visible, being overgrown with grass, and on a level, or nearly on a level, with the ground. Such graves were a striking emblem of the concealed corruption of the scribes and Pharisees. Passengers, too, might stumble on such graves, and fall, or at least step on them, or touch them, and so become ceremonially unclean before they were aware of it. Thus, these scribes and Pharisees were not only full of hidden iniquity themselves, but, by their manners and conduct, were the means of corrupting those who had intercourse with them. And so, familiarity with all ungodly persons is dangerous and infectious, and especially familiarity with those whose depravity does not appear on the surface of their character, but is only discovered on more thorough acquaintance. Against open and universal profligacy of manners, most

men are sufficiently on their guard to avoid being led astray by it; but where the concealment of corruption prevents them from suspecting harm, the infection often insinuates itself so gradually, that they are essentially injured before they are at all aware of their danger.

From the passage, thus explained, we may learn,

1. *That the written word of God is the true rule of doctrine and duty, to the exclusion of oral tradition.* We have noticed that, though divers washings were appointed by the law, there were no such washings enjoined in it as those here referred to; that the Pharisees rested them on the tradition of the elders; that our Lord's practice showed that no such authority was binding; and that we have his express declaration, that they made the Word of God of none effect by their traditions. And so it is still. Nothing should be acknowledged by us as a rule, but Scripture. All things necessary to salvation, and all things that the Head of the Church intended to be universally and permanently obligatory on the Church, were committed to writing by inspired men, after having been delivered by himself and his apostles by word—that is, in oral teaching. Untaught, however, by the example of the Jews and the condemnatory sentence pronounced on it by Jesus Christ, the Papists have dared to say that the “oral traditions of the (Roman) Catholic Church are to be received with equal piety and reverence as the books of the Old and New Testaments;” “which traditions\* if any one knowingly despise, let him be accursed.” The consequence of this has been the same as formerly; they have made the commandments of God of no effect by their traditions, setting aside much that is truly scriptural, and foisting in a great variety of pernicious heresies, and superstitious practices. It is our bounden duty to reject the whole of these traditions, and to adhere exclusively to the Holy Scriptures. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them.”

2. We learn, from this passage, *the unlawfulness of attempting to impose ceremonies of human invention on others, and of complying with such ceremonies ourselves; especially, when they are represented as binding on the conscience, and when they are made essential terms of communion.* Washing the hands before a meal might have been free from objection, had it been merely adopted like any other common

\* Council of Trent.



custom of the country: but, when it assumed the form of a religious duty, when it was enjoined as binding on the conscience, and when it was put in the place of inward purity, it lost its harmless character, it became a sinful imposition; and, as we have seen, Christ, our perfect example, would not comply with it. But has there not been a great deal of this kind of superstitious and tyrannical imposition practised in the Church? What useless, cumbersome, and unlawful additions have been made to the beautifully simple ordinances of the gospel! Such additions rendered a thorough reformation and throwing off of the heavy yoke absolutely necessary. Whatever may be imagined to the contrary, there can be neither acceptance with God, nor benefit to man, in any observances not of divine appointment. "In vain do they worship God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Of every thing of the kind this question implies the rejection, "Who hath required this at your hand?" It is an admirable principle, to admit nothing into Christian worship but what has express scriptural authority in reference to the Christian dispensation. What is evidently contrary to Scripture ought to be rejected without a moment's hesitation. And not only so, but even those things which may be considered as matters of indifference in themselves, ought to be resisted when any attempt is made to impose them as of divine authority, or as essential to Church fellowship. In such cases, the apostle Paul's example teaches the Christian to say, "All things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." When ecclesiastical tyrants begin, by such impositions, to say to the soul, "Bow down, that we may go over," it is time to let them know that they are not thus to lord it over God's heritage: it is time for Christians resolutely to act on the precept, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

3. We here learn that *true religion is a universal principle*. "These things ought ye to have done," said Jesus, "and not to leave the other undone." Religion does not, indeed, exist in a state of perfection, as to degree, in any one particular; but it extends to every particular in the character which it influences; so that the true Christian is not wilfully and habitually neglectful of any thing he sees to be incumbent. It includes the least, while it is peculiarly concerned about the weightier matters of the law. The believer

is not "partial in the law;"\* he is not like Herod, who "heard John gladly, and did many things," but still continued a slave to presumptuous and reigning sins. His language is, without exception, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Let us think well of this: and let us see that we be able to say, from the heart, with David, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."—"Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently; oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

Lastly, We learn, from this passage, throughout, *the sin and folly of resting satisfied with the fair and hypocritical outside of Pharisaism; and, of course, the necessity of a radical change of state and heart—of inward purity, and of sincere, scriptural, active, consistent piety and morality.* Suppose we were to gain the object of the Pharisee, and succeed in making men believe that we were eminent in sanctity; and suppose we were to succeed even in imposing on ourselves the belief that we were so—all that could avail us nothing to salvation. "Except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." If we would be the children of God, we must "serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." "I the Lord search the heart," saith he; "I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." It is not enough to preserve some outward decency: we must also have inward purity. The divine command is this: "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"—"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Now, this cleansing implies pardon, coming through faith in the atonement. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth believers from all sin: believers wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. No real purification can come to us, except in this way. Though we should "wash ourselves with snow-water, and make our hands ever so clean," yet God would plunge us in the ditch, and our own clothes would abhor us, if there were no daysman between us, to lay his hand upon us both.

\* Mal. ii. 9.

This cleansing also implies regeneration: "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," which God sheds on sinners abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." But, when the heart itself is cleansed, then those things which proceed from it are clean also. Nothing else but this washing from the guilt and pollution of sin by the blood and Spirit of Christ will do; nothing else will cleanse the soul. Besides, wherever this radical change takes place, there is also, at the same time, a purification, in the sense of actual repentance and amendment. Think you that because Pilate "took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person," he was really innocent, when he still scourged Jesus, and delivered him to be crucified? Or think you that the washings of the Pharisees were a proper substitute for their ceasing from their crimes? No. If we are to be truly clean, we must attend to the injunctions: "Wash you, and make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Let us beware, too, of the particular sins with which the Pharisees are, in this passage, proved to have been guilty. Let us beware of a bigoted zeal for forms, to the neglect of the substance, of piety; for, there are still some who are full of fiery zeal for their own peculiarities, and yet decided enemies to vital religion. Let us beware of "ravening"—of extortion, and reigning covetousness in any form: and let us rather cultivate a spirit of superiority to the world, and give alms liberally, as God may enable us. Let us beware of the pride of affecting the chief seats, and pompous titles; and let us rather "in honour prefer one another:" for, "how can we believe, if we receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" Especially, let us beware of this spirit in reference to the house of God. "It savours much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care for going to church, unless they can look fine, and make a figure there."\* Let us beware of secret depravity. We are all, naturally, as concealed graves. Let us look into our own breasts. Let us open up the dark chamber of iniquity that is there: and let us seek that it may be purified. If we are yet totally im-

\* Henry on Matt. xxiii. 6.

pure, let us seek the new heart and the new spirit, that there may be a commencement of spirituality within us. But such language as the following becomes us all, with a view, either to the commencement of the divine life in our souls, or to our farther purification: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."—"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord; and renew a right spirit within me."—"Sprinkle clean water upon us, and we shall be clean; from all our filthiness, and from all our idols do thou cleanse us." Enable us to come out from among the wicked, and to be separate, so that we may not touch the unclean thing, and that thou mayst be a Father to us, and take us for thy sons and daughters, O Lord God Almighty. And, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

## LECTURE LXII.

LUKE XI. 45-54.

"Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also. 46. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. 47. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: 50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. 52. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. 53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; 54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him."

In denouncing, as in the 44th verse, the third woe on the Pharisees, our Lord included and expressly mentioned the scribes along with them: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." In immediate connexion with this, Luke goes on to say, in the passage before us, "*Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.*" We are furnished with the key to this interference by the circumstance that the words "scribes" and "lawyers" were only different ways of designating the same persons. Thus, the same person who is called a "lawyer" in Matt. xxii. 35, is called "one of the scribes," in Mark xii. 28. And, as they are often joined with the Pharisees, under the designation of the Scribes, so they are sometimes joined with them under the designation of Lawyers;—as in Luke vii. 30. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves." The word lawyers, however, as applied to these people, is to be understood, not in the sense which it now commonly bears with

us, but as signifying doctors—that is, teachers, or expounders of the law. Indeed we find them in the 5th chapter and 17th verse of this Gospel, joined with the Pharisees, under the title of “doctors of the law.” As these lawyers, or doctors of the law, *expounded* the law according to the traditions, and the Pharisees *observed*, or pretended to observe, the law according to the traditions, there was an intimate connexion between them, and they were both chargeable, generally speaking, with the same theoretical and practical errors, and espoused each other’s cause; nay, though it was not necessary that they should be so, many of the lawyers were of the sect of the Pharisees. The lawyers, on this occasion, complained that Christ had reproached, reviled, or abused them; for so they spake of his just reproofs, vainly judging themselves to be above all fault.

But, carrying along with us the practical improvement, we observe that the workings of human nature are much the same in substance in every age, though modified by circumstances. Is there not still a similar combination, and resemblance, and defence of each other’s views and conduct, among lax teachers, and worldly men of almost every description? And is there not a consorting together among those classes who substitute hypocritical observances for sincere piety and morality, and self-righteousness, and forms, and outward ordinances, for justification by faith in Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit? Let us mark and avoid every thing of that kind.

Is it not, also, still common to be offended with just and faithful reproofs, and to resist them and resent them, as if they were groundless and malevolent reproaches? As it was with Israel of old, in the time of Jeremiah,\* so it is with too many still. “Behold, the word of the Lord is to them a reproach; they have no delight in it.” They hate a plain exposure of their false opinions, and sinful practices, and danger, like Ahab, who said of Micaiah, “I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” Our Lord himself said, “The world hateth me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.” But, if the things said, be in themselves right, it is true wisdom for us to avail ourselves of them, as far as they in any way apply to us. Even though we may be reproached and attacked in a spirit of rancour, it is wise to get all the good we can from the treatment. It is right to be taught,

\* Jer. vi. 10.

even by an enemy. But, especially, friendly and faithful admonitions, addressed to us with the benevolent intention of doing us good, should be taken in good part, and carefully improved. It is a happy circumstance when men are so far humbled as to submit to reproof. "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear."—"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."—"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

A less faithful reprover than Jesus Christ might, when thus turned upon, have retracted, or explained away, what he had said, or might have assured the lawyers that they were too hasty in applying his sharp reproofs to themselves: but, instead of that, he directly repeats the woe and the charge, with new illustrations. "*And he said*" (verse 46), "*Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.*" The law of Moses, even in its true and unstretched meaning, though excellent, and necessary for the time and for the reasons for which it was given, was of difficult and expensive observance; so that the apostle Peter said, on occasion of the dissension about Christians keeping the law of Moses: "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" But the scribes, not taking it and understanding it correctly as they found it in Scripture, rendered it vastly more difficult by their rigorous decisions on the letter of some of the precepts, and by a great many additions for which they could plead no authority but tradition. It appears, however, that while they were extremely rigorous in imposing these things on others, they were very lax in the observance of them themselves. The scribes and Pharisees, "say and do not," said our Lord elsewhere.\* Severe to others, they were indulgent to themselves, dispensing altogether with some things, and compounding for others, so as to allow their rules to interfere very little with their own inclinations.

On this we may remark, for our own instruction, that while those teachers who have presumed to add superstitious and burdensome observances of human contrivance to the scriptural rule of duty, are themselves, generally speaking, negligent in their conduct, and never to be trusted, or

\* Matt. xxiii. 3.

obeyed, in these respects, we ought also to be very conscientiously attentive that our own practice correspond with our directions to others, in things which are agreeable to the Word of God. What we prescribe to others, we must do ourselves. The inconsistency, sinfulness, and bad effects of the opposite conduct, are thus well exposed in Rom. ii. from the 17th verse, in a passage which, though addressed to "him who is called a Jew," is applicable, in spirit, to him who is called a Christian. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, who hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." This admonition to the lawyers, or doctors of the law, is more peculiarly worthy of the consideration of ministers. How criminal and how sad, if, while we call on the people to believe and obey the gospel, we continue unbelieving and disobedient ourselves, and destroy by our practice what we labour to establish by our preaching! But let not the admonition be disregarded by any of you who profess to receive, and are accustomed to advocate, the strict rules of Christian duty; for, what scandal will you bring on the worthy name whereby you are called, and what guilt will you contract yourselves, if, while you are speaking fair, there be seven abominations in your heart, and if, while you are severe on the faults of others, and high in the tone of your demands, you yourselves be found transgressors!

Verses 47 and 48: "*Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.*" The similar passage in Matt. xxiii. 29, runs thus, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the



sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them who killed the prophets." We are by no means to suppose that our Lord here condemned, in general, the respect which is sincerely shown to the dead, by the erection and repair of monuments with inscriptions, and the like. Something of this kind has been common in all nations, especially in honour of those who lost their lives in what was considered a good cause. A pleasing instance of such respect to a prophet upwards of three hundred years after he prophesied, is mentioned in 2 Kings xxiii. 17. "Then he," that is, good king Josiah, "said, What title," or inscription, "is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God who came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done, against the altar of Bethel. And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria." At the same time, the first building and the subsequent repairing of monuments are often owing to vanity, or hypocrisy, and, in such cases, are plainly blameworthy. Attention of this kind is often the very opposite of a real regard for the principles and character of the dead. It was surely a pleasing circumstance to which Peter adverted, when he said, upwards of a thousand years after David's death, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day:" but, what Josephus, in his *Antiquities*,\* relates of Herod repairing, in a very expensive and splendid manner, the sepulchre of king David, cannot be considered as an act of sincere regard to his memory, or any indication of true piety. As for the scribes and Pharisees—when we consider that they made void the doctrines of the prophets, and rejected the Messiah of whom they testified, it is plain that their conduct in rebuilding and ornamenting their tombs was mere hypocrisy. It is true that, as yet, their iniquity, in this respect, was not fully developed: but they could not conceal the enmity of their hearts against Jesus and his apostles, and they were already meditating and taking counsel to put him to death. Under the mask of veneration for the dead prophets, they were cherishing hatred and cruelty against the living.

\* Lib. xvi.

Their conduct in this way has been imitated, nay, surpassed, by the followers of the Man of Sin. With the same cruelty towards the living witnesses for the truth, they have been guilty of greater superstition and impiety. We read, no doubt, of the Pharisees showing a hypocritical care to preserve the tombs of ancient saints: but we do not read of them, foolish and wicked and careless of Scripture as they were, dedicating, of their own authority, particular days and places to saints, either of Scripture history, or of their own making;—we do not read of them enshrining the relics of saints, or burning incense to them, or imagining that their devotion would be more acceptable because offered at their tombs, or forming images of them, or kneeling to them, or praying to them. Such follies and abominations as these were unknown among them; but were introduced, in the most rampant form, under the great apostasy in the Christian Church; the leaders and adherents of which apostasy, at the very time they were showing such unscriptural, hypocritical, and idolatrous regard to dead saints, real or imaginary, were “making themselves drunk with the blood of the living saints, wherever they had the power to execute their cruel purpose. And though wherever such power is taken from them, or policy, or other circumstances restrain them from its exercise, they are accustomed to speak against persecution; yet they do palliate its enormity, they canonize those who were guilty of it, they reject the doctrines of the prophets and the true saints of Scripture; and however individuals of them who adhere to the system are of a better spirit, the system itself is uncharitable and exclusive; it actually exercises in some places a very tyrannical sway, and were it not for restraints brought to bear on it from without, it would still urge men on to deeds of cruel oppression and of blood.

But, looking at this idea in its more direct bearing on ourselves—is it not common for some of us to think that if we had lived in the days of the prophets, or of Christ and the apostles, we would have stood aloof from those who opposed and killed them, and would have supported them to the utmost, not considering whether we may not still be under the influence of that natural enmity which would have broken out in that way then, and which shows itself in a too plain, though different way now? There are those, too, who, from the force of altered circumstances, are brought to speak favourably of departed benefactors of the

Church, and, perhaps, to subscribe to their monuments, who yet are altogether of a different spirit from them. There are also some who can praise faithful ministers when they are gone, who did not improve their ministry while they lived, and who still hold out against the truth. There are even some who, while they honour, in words, the memory of the faithful teachers of former times, dislike and vilify the faithful teachers of their own times. The departed are out of sight, and silent, and at a distance; the living are seen, and heard, and close upon them. The dead disturb not their slumbers; but the living, by their doctrines and life, break their false peace. Like the two witnesses prophesied of in the Revelation, faithful teachers, and, indeed, all faithful Christians, "torment them that dwell on the earth;" that is, by their doctrine, example, and reproofs, they disquiet their minds, so that they cannot proceed without disturbance in their course of worldliness and ungodliness. It concerns us all to think well of this. It is common, too, for people who are neglecting the opportunities of salvation, with which they themselves are favoured, to imagine that if they had had the opportunities of other times, it would have been different with them, forgetting that the fault of their present hardness is all their own, and that there is every reason to believe that the same perversity would have characterized them in any circumstances. And what shall we say of those who, having had pious parents, are heard to speak honourably of their memory, but who are, as to religion, altogether of a different character? Do they imagine that such talk will pass for piety with Him whose word teaches that every man must stand or fall by himself? Let them know that good parental example not followed, must reflect disgrace on them, and aggravate their guilt and condemnation.

The same subject is prosecuted as follows: "*Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute; that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.*" Though there are some passages in the Old Testament\* somewhat similar to this, which speak of the past conduct of the Jews to God's pro-

\* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15; Neh. ix. 26.

phets, this appears to be, not a quotation, but the original words of Christ himself. It is the most common opinion, that the words, "Therefore also said the wisdom of God," are the words of Luke designating the Redeemer himself as the wisdom of God; as Paul, writing to the Corinthians, calls him "the power of God and the wisdom of God." This idea is strengthened by the consideration, that in the passage of Matt. xxiii. 34, which is very similar, though referring to a different occasion, our Lord is represented in the usual plain way, as speaking in his own person, thus: "Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify: and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." At all events, as some hesitate to adopt this idea in its full extent, we are to consider Christ as authoritatively declaring what divine wisdom had determined as to the mission of these inspired men, and as predicting what would be the result. In this respect, these Jews too closely imitated the conduct of their persecuting forefathers: for, the subsequent history of the Church shows how, by themselves, or by handing them over to the Roman power, they persecuted and put to death most of the apostles, and other prophets, or inspired teachers of the gospel.

The word "that," with which the 50th verse is introduced, is to be understood as pointing out merely the event, and not the design, and is equivalent to "so that." The Lord is "long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." With regard both to individuals and nations, he generally waits long before he strikes. Perseverance, however, in disobedience, is sure to bring down his vengeance at last. The reference here is chiefly to the Jews as a nation. By joining, as most of them did, in opposition to Christ and his apostles, they showed themselves to be of the same spirit with their persecuting fathers, and identified themselves, as it were, with their crimes; and, by their obstinate wickedness, which surpassed whatever had been shown before, they were accumulating on themselves the aggravated guilt and punishment of the blood of all the prophets and righteous men that had

ever been shed. God was to "require" it of them; that is, he was to visit them and inflict punishment on them for it. The circumstances of the murder of righteous Abel by his brother Cain, out of envy, and because Cain's "own works were evil, and his brother's good," are well known. Having mentioned the first Old Testament martyr, Jesus mentions one of a much lower age. There is a difference of opinion, however, as to who is here intended. Most of the commentators believe that the Zacharias here mentioned was the same of whom we thus read in 2 Chron. xxiv. 20: "And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people [in an elevated situation, that they might see and hear him], and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord;" the enormity of the crime being increased by the sacredness of the place in which it was committed. "Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son: and when he died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it," or, as it might be rendered, in the future, and prophetically, "The Lord will look upon it, and require it." In answer to the objection, that whereas our Lord, in Matthew, calls this Zacharias the son of Barachias, the person mentioned in 2 Chronicles is called the son of Jehoiada, it is observed that the Jews frequently had two names, as Abiel and Ner, Matthew and Levi, Lebbeus and Thaddeus. Others,\* though with less probability, consider the person here mentioned to have been the less prophet Zechariah, who is called, in the first verse of his prophecy, "the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo;" and they remark that, though the temple was in ruins in the beginning of his life, he lived till after it was rebuilt, and might have suffered martyrdom in it; and also that there is mention, in the Jewish Targum, of a tradition of Zechariah, the son of Iddo, being slain in the house of the sanctuary of the Lord, because he would have withdrawn the people from their evil ways.†

On many occasions, the wrath of God had already visited the Jewish people, because of this and other crimes; but

\* Among whom is Scott.

† The opinions which refer this to the father of John the Baptist, and to a later person still, are altogether untenable.

now the time was approaching when it was to come on them far more fiercely than ever, and so as utterly to destroy them as a nation. They were continuing to increase their national guilt, till it was approaching the highest pitch which a God of long-suffering could endure. This was what our Lord, according to Matthew, called "filling up the measure of their fathers;"—a way of speaking illustrated by such passages as these, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full;" and, "The Jews both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, to fill up their sins alway: for, the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." In this case, the Lord was to visit, in a most awful manner, "the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hated him." This was fulfilled in the dreadful temporal destruction which came on their temple, city, and nation, from the Romans; and in the still more dreadful misery which, in the unseen world, overtook those of them who died in impenitence and in the rejection of the only Saviour.

But let us apply this to ourselves. When we think of the prophets and apostles whose writings and lives we read, and who may therefore be said to have been sent to us, let us see, that while we profess to acknowledge them as inspired, and thus honour them in so far, we do not pour contempt on their memory, and show that we would have been likely to join with their enemies, by refusing to listen to what they have revealed and enjoined, and to follow their example. Instead of that, let us give heed to their sure word of prophecy, and take them "who have spoken in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering affliction and of patience."

Again; let the sinner who is continuing in a life of unbelief and rebellion, think well what he is doing when he is thus filling up the measure of his iniquity, and what will be the consequence, if he go on till it be full. O foolish and infatuated transgressor! thus to abuse the divine patience, and to dare omnipotence. "Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and

impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works." The cloud of wrath is gathering thick around thee, and will soon burst in a storm on thy head. Be entreated to stop. Seek forgiveness for past sin by faith in the blood of Christ, who will then prove to thee as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: and, instead of adding to thy sins, begin, by a patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.

This part of the passage is also very admonitory with regard to national guilt and national judgments. The awful judgments of the Jewish nation, when the measure of their iniquity was filled up, were a specimen of what every nation may expect that follows a similar career. Individuals may escape in this life, and yet be overtaken by vengeance hereafter; but nations have no existence, as nations, in the other world; and therefore, if they are to be punished at all, it must be in this world. While nations, too, are accountable for all national sins, the guilt of innocent blood, and especially of blood shed in persecution, is what God is peculiarly careful to require of them. How plainly has the seat of the beast, especially the part of it composed of the French nation, been suffering for many years on account of the torrents of blood shed in the persecution of those who were slain for the word of God, and the testimony which they held! The time also will come, when the universal and final retribution will thus be celebrated by a "great voice of much people in heaven,"—"Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." If we may hope that the blood thus shed in former times in our own land has been repented of, and if there be certain pleasing signs on which we can fix our eye, is there not, however, reason to apprehend the just judgments of God on our nation, because of the many iniquities which prevail in it? Let us sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of us. May the Lord pour down a spirit of prayer, and of reformation on all ranks, that we may be enabled to comply with his call, "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

Our Lord brings forward this one more charge, and denounces a corresponding woe, against the scribes, "*Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.*" A key used to be given to stewards of the household and some other office-bearers on their appointment; so that a key became the emblem of authority.\* It is said, too, that a key was delivered into the hands of a rabbi, or Jewish doctor of the law, as a token of his authority to open up, or expound the law. It is recorded that "when Rabbi Samuel, the Little, died, his key and his tablet were hung on his tomb.† If, then, a key was delivered to a doctor of the law, as a badge of his office, the allusion, as made to this by our Lord, would be very beautiful; it would be as if he had said, "You had a key given to you: but instead of keeping it for constant use, you have carried it away, and secreted it." The meaning of the figurative language is, that these scribes, who should have done everything they could to cause the people to understand, believe, and obey the whole Old Testament Scriptures, kept them in the dark, and even led them into gross errors, by their traditions and false interpretations. In particular, they inculcated ceremonies, but dealt very unfaithfully with the prophecies, and with whatever was intended to prepare for the reception of Messiah. These they either concealed or perverted. In their carnal views of these things, the key, the leading principle to the discovery of Jesus' Messiahship, was lost. "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men," said our Lord, according to Matthew:—they employed the key, so to speak, to lock the door of salvation against the people. They did not enter in themselves, for they rejected the gospel of Christ. In John vii. 48, we meet with the question: "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?" Certainly but few did. They not only would not go in themselves, but they went so far as to do their utmost to prevent those from entering in—that is, from embracing and professing the gospel—who seemed inclined to do so. They did what they could to prevent this, by their own example, by contumelious language, by excommunication, by forbidding to teach in the name of Jesus, and by every species of unjustifiable and wicked interference.

\* Isa. xxii. 22; Rev. iii. 7.

† Dr A. Clarke on Matt. xxiii. 13. See also Grotius and Doddridge.



And has there not been exhibited, in the great apostasy, to which we have found it necessary already to advert, a copy of this original portrait, not improved in any respect, but still more unseemly in all its features? Have they not, instead of labouring to instruct the people in all revealed truth, been careful to keep them in ignorance of it? Have they not darkened and perverted it, by their traditions and false glosses? Pretending that the key was their own exclusive property, have they not kept it lying rusting and useless? Nay, they have done what the scribes and Pharisees never dared to do—they have kept back the Word of God altogether from many, declaring that it was not safe for them to read it. And where they cannot altogether prevent the people from having it, they prevent them as much as possible, and clog it with many incumbrances, and will not let it speak without their commentary, and tell men that they must yield up their judgment and their consciences to them. May the Lord speedily deliver every part of the Church from such impositions!

But it is an awful thing, if professed teachers, of any denomination, take away the key of knowledge, and darken or pervert the truth. May they be all “scribes” thoroughly “instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,” and instrumental in introducing many others into that kingdom!

We should also notice here the great guilt they incur who exert themselves to injure others in their spiritual state. It is surely bad enough that they will not enter in themselves. Why should they seek to hinder others? The Lord enable us all to beware of such atrocious conduct! May we be all introduced into a state of grace ourselves, and anxious to carry as many along with us as possible!

The chapter concludes thus: “*And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things, laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.*” Being greatly provoked by his sharp and just reproofs, they set on him, while yet in the Pharisee’s house, with many captious and ensnaring questions, hoping to obtain a handle against him. This was their frequent attempt, of which we have a remarkable instance in Matt. xxii. 15: “Then went the Pharisees and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk; and they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians,” for that malicious purpose; but he answered them so wisely, *that they marvelled and went away.* In these attempts were

fulfilled in him, as the antitype, the words of the Psalmist: "Every day they wrest my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul."

Having endeavoured to carry the practical improvement along with us, it only remains to apply to ourselves these two last verses in the way of caution and of instruction.

In the way of caution—let us beware of imitating the scribes and Pharisees in endeavouring to ensnare those with whom we may come into collision on the subject of religion, or those who are the teachers of it. Isaiah speaks with much disapprobation of those that "make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate." Let us not condemn a man for a word misplaced, or misunderstood, which he is willing to retract. And, if we find it necessary to dispute with a person, let us not be captious, but let us reason fairly.

In the way of instruction—we are here taught that when we are called on to speak faithfully in defence of the truth, we must expect opposition, and that not of the most honourable kind. We must expect that ungenerous adversaries will try to provoke us to say, or do, something, from which they may take an unfair advantage of us; and it may happen that they seek to establish their own credit by ruining ours. It is very difficult to conduct such controversies with propriety: but if called to them (and many of us will be so in our common intercourse and conversation), such rules as these will be useful: Let us study to be well acquainted with the subject on which we are speaking, and to go no farther than we clearly see our way, and the Word of God warrants. Let us be discreet and cautious in our language. Let us preserve good temper and patience, lest we speak unadvisedly with our lips, and thus injure the cause which we sincerely mean to promote. Let us endeavour in meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves. Let us follow the beautiful example of the Lord Jesus Christ, considering him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously. And let us earnestly implore the assistance of God, in prayer, beseeching him to set a watch before our mouth, to keep the door of our lips, and to give us a mouth and wisdom which "all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist."

Ps. lvi. 5, 6.

## LECTURE LXIII.

## LUKE XII. 1-9.

"In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. 3. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops. 4. And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him. 6. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. 8. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; 9. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God."

In the latter part of the preceding chapter, we had an account of our Lord's dining in the house of a certain Pharisee, and of the rebukes he there faithfully administered to the Pharisees and scribes. "*In the mean time,*" continues Luke, in the beginning of this 12th chapter, that is, while Christ was in the house, and engaged in this manner, "*there were gathered together an innumerable multitude,*" literally myriads "*of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another,*" in their desire to get near enough to see and to hear him. We read, in the 29th verse of the foregoing chapter, that "the people were gathered thick together;" and that was in the early part of the day, as appears from the tenor of the history. Now, however, the crowd had greatly increased in the neighbourhood of the house in which Jesus was. It is a pleasant thing to see people flocking in crowds to hear the words of Christ in the public ordinances. To this there is a reference in the prophetic passages. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be:" and, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves

to their windows?" But we know that only a small proportion of the crowds who came to hear Christ, received any saving benefit; and there is reason to fear that this is still too much the case. It is so far well that a multitude assembles to hear the gospel; but let us not thence conclude that the great object of the Christian ministry is gained; let us consider "faith unto salvation" as the ultimate object; and let every one who has joined the multitude think thus with himself: "I am present with the rest, but am I a true worshipper? I have come to hear, but am I receiving with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save my soul?"

Though it is not expressly stated, we must, from the circumstances of the case, suppose that our Lord now left the house of the Pharisee, and went into the open air, that he might be heard by the crowd who were anxiously waiting for him. He began, however, with addressing himself more immediately to his own disciples, which may mean either the twelve only, or all those who were in the habit of waiting on his teaching to learn the way of life: but though he addressed what he said to them, it was also in the hearing, and for the benefit, of the multitude. On this we may remark, that it is proper to address sometimes one part of our audience, and sometimes another, and to distinguish the different classes; and yet that what is said to any one part, if rightly applied, will be instructive to all. What is said to believers may prove useful to unbelievers; and on the contrary, what is said to unbelievers may prove useful to believers. "*He began to say unto his disciples first of all,*" as it is pointed in our copies, which signifies both that he began with his disciples, and that this was the first thing he said to them. Or if, as some think, the comma should come immediately after the word disciples, then the next clause will read: "First of all beware," that is, chiefly, and above all things, beware:—"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." That our Lord employed the word "leaven" to signify doctrine, is plain from Matt. xvi. 6, where he said to his disciples, to the same purpose as here: "Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees," and made them understand "how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees." The comparison is an apt one; for, as a piece of leaven, or soured dough, when mixed with a greater quantity of dough, sours, and

ferments, and makes like itself the whole, so doctrines, or principles, whether good or bad, influence, according to their own nature, the affections and conduct of those who embrace them. "The kingdom of heaven," said Christ, "is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," said Paul twice. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, *which is hypocrisy.*" Having, in the foregoing chapter, given various illustrations of Pharisaical hypocrisy, Jesus now, in express terms, guards his disciples against it. He guards them against pretending to be what they were not—against assuming the character, and resting satisfied with the outward appearance and form of religion, when they were destitute of its reality and power. He then proceeds to show them the complete folly of hypocrisy, from the consideration that, sooner or later, it would be detected and exposed. "*For there is nothing covered,*" nothing so carefully concealed, "*that shall not be revealed,*" and laid open; "*neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore,*" or, so that, "*whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear,*" or whispered, "*in closets,*" in the most retired places, "*shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.*" The roofs of houses, in the East, were flat, and it was customary to go out on them, for various purposes; and, in particular, as appears from this passage, to make proclamations in the hearing of those who were on the streets. As there are no bells in Turkey, criers proclaim, at the present day, the hours of Mohammedan worship from the house-tops, or minarets of the mosques.

Now, my friends, what Jesus said to his disciples you ought to consider him as also saying to you, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." And, that you may be able to know and avoid this sin, notice these marks of the hypocrite. He is one who pretends to be possessed of the inward graces of faith and regeneration, when he is not. He is one who, though he engage in exercises of devotion, is not interested in them. He is one who wishes rather to appear than to be pious. He is one who partially chooses some duties (and these are generally the more noticeable) to the neglect of other duties which are generally the more secret and more weighty. He is known by his pride, as is shown in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican; and, having no root in himself, he falls away

in the time of trial. "What is the hope of the hypocrite," asks Job, "though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"

Let Job's question lead you to think seriously and with godly jealousy over yourselves, of the possibility and danger of your indulging a hypocritical spirit and a false hope. It may appear somewhat strange that a hypocrite should have any hope, but be it remembered that he sometimes succeeds in imposing on himself, as well as on others. He may have hope from his ignorance of himself—from his disregard of the spirituality and extent of the divine law—from the flatteries of others, and from the length he may go in knowledge, in belief of certain things, in spurious repentance, in passing and unfruitful joy, in abstaining from gross sins, in the preservation of external decency, in the outward observance of ordinances, and, in short, in whatever has the appearance, but not the reality of religion. The hypocrite, it is also implied, may gain somewhat; if he act his part well, he may gain some worldly end—he may gain a false peace, and he may gain the esteem of his fellow-creatures during his life, and their applause when he is dead. But what are his hope and his gain worth, when God taketh away his soul?—when God says unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?" What can he be profited, however much he gain, if he lose his own soul? How can his hope endure, when it has no support, or nourishment? "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish; whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure." Nay, hypocrisy entails not only disappointment, but ruin. The portion appointed for the hypocrites is to be "cut asunder," and condemned to the place where there are "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

If, then, there be any of you who are living in a state of conscious hypocrisy, surely nothing can be more plain to yourselves than that you ought immediately to seek another spirit. And as there may be of you who are not quite aware of it, but who are habitually hypocritical notwithstanding; it will be well for you to try how far your true, undisguised, inward feelings correspond with your outward

profession and actions, for this, in praying for the influence of the Holy Spirit, is the likely way to bring you to conviction. Remember, that while man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart; and that, though you may impose on others, and even on yourselves, you cannot impose on him.

Let it be remembered, too, that as believers, though they have every grace in some degree, have no grace in perfection, so, in particular, the grace of sincerity is not perfect in them; in other words, let it be remembered, that there is some hypocrisy even in the people of God. Let those who truly fear the Lord be aware of this, that they may conscientiously guard against it. Let not their prayer proceed out of feigned lips. Let them see to it that their hearts go along with their words and actions. With this view, let them endeavour to realize an abiding sense of God's presence and omniscience; and let the prayer of each of them be, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me."—"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart"—"I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers."

Verses 4-7: "*And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.*"

Having, in the preceding verses, warned his disciples against hypocrisy, Jesus, in these, warns them against the sinful fear of man. It was not unusual for him to repeat some truths on different occasions, in similar, though not always the very same words; and we find the greater part of what is recorded here also recorded, in reference probably to an earlier period, in the 10th chapter of Matthew. He here addressed his disciples by the endearing appellation of "friends," to signify the love he bore to them, and the intimacy to which he admitted them. "Henceforth," said he,\* "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known

\* John xv. 15.

unto you." This caution against the fear of man, or exhortation to holy courage, was peculiarly suitable to the disciples who were soon to be exposed to very severe trials for Jesus' sake. "They shall put you out of the synagogues," said he elsewhere; "yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."—"Be not afraid of them that kill the body;" let not the apprehension of persecution, though it should be unto death, so terrify you as to cause you to apostatize from me, or to sink into despondency. Men can kill the body, "but after that have no more that they can do." According to Matt. x. 28, Jesus said, "They are not able to kill the soul." Men's rage can affect the martyrs no farther than their martyrdom. Their body, when deprived of life, is insensible to further abusive treatment, and their soul is safe for ever. They cannot *kill* the soul—this expression plainly teaches that the soul is immaterial, or altogether different from the body; that it survives the death of the body, and that it enters immediately on a new state of conscious existence. This is the first consideration which our Lord addressed to his disciples, as a reason against the fear of man: and surely it was well adapted to that purpose, for why should their apprehension, even of the killing of the body, which must at all events die a natural death ere long, move from their steadfastness those whose souls cannot be injured, and whose hopes are sure for eternity?

"But," adds our Lord, "I will forewarn," or point out to, "you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." Or, according to Matthew, "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Viewing this verse in a general way, we learn from it that it is the duty of believers to fear God, not indeed with a slavish fear, or terror, but with that holy and filial fear, with that reverence, which makes them afraid to offend, and anxious in every respect to please him. We are here reminded, also, of the solemn truth that the anger and the favour of God extend far beyond death, introducing the departed soul immediately, and the risen body at the last day, into endless misery, or endless happiness. Viewing, again, the verse in the connexion in which it here stands with the exhortation against the fear of man, it not only presents the proper object of fear in contrast with the improper, but suggests a strong reason in favour of the one, and against the other; for,



however terrible the wrath of man may be, the wrath of God must be much more terrible to those who have any correct idea of what it implies; and therefore, every enlightened man must see the wisdom of submitting to any sacrifice, however great, rather than that he should apostatize from the truth, and thereby incur the endless displeasure of the Almighty.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." The Roman coins were now in common use in Judea, and indeed through the greater part of the world. The Roman farthing,\* being one-tenth of the value of the penny,† and the penny being equal to sevenpence halfpenny of our money, their farthing, of course, was equal to three farthings of our money. On the former occasion, as related by Matthew,‡ our Lord said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?"—and here he says, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?"—a proportion which is often observed in selling articles, according to the rule of some advantage being allowed when a greater number are taken. These birds seem to have been used for food. Of small value as they are, "not one of them is forgotten before God." They are not forgotten, for they are cared for, and provided for, during their life: "Our heavenly Father feedeth them." Nor are they forgotten in their death, seeing not one of them dies, or is killed, but by his appointment: as it is in Matthew, "One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." It is not altogether uninteresting to remark that even the ancient heathen had some idea of a kind of providence, or superhuman purpose and power, which they called fate, being concerned in the life and death of animals; thus, Homer,§ in one of his similes, speaks of a stag escaping from the hunters, because it was not in the fates that they should catch him. A Jewish writer gives this account of three men, who, at an early period, in order to shelter themselves from a dreadful persecution, shut themselves up in a cave, and lived on dry husks. After thirteen years they came out, and sitting at the mouth of the cave, they observed a fowler stretching his nets to catch birds; and as often as the Bath Kol (that is, the daughter of the voice,

\* "As" or "assarius." † "Denarius." ‡ Matt. x. 29.

§ Οὐδ' ἀρα το σφι κίχνηται αἰσιμον ἦεν.—Il. xv. 274.

or the voice from heaven) said, "Escape!" the bird escaped: but when it said, "A dart!" the bird was taken. Then the rabbi said, "Even a bird is not taken without Heaven, how much less the life of man?"\* "A sparrow shall not fall on the ground without your Father," says our Lord; that is, without his knowledge, and will, or counsel.

This is one of the most express texts in favour of the doctrine of a *particular providence*. The providence of God extends to the smallest, as well as to the greatest objects and concerns. "His kingdom ruleth over all." Circumstances the most minute, and to us the most fortuitous, are all ordered by him. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." It is not, then, that these smaller matters are comparatively overlooked in God's attention to the concerns of men; but when such is his care over less important creatures, surely, the certainty of his care over rational and immortal beings, and especially, his own people, must come home to the mind with very strong and delightful conviction. They are "of more value than many sparrows;" nay, one human soul is of more value than the whole irrational creation. Our Lord gives this further beautiful illustration of the doctrine in reference especially to his people, "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered:" that is, even the most inconsiderable and least regarded circumstances are all noted and cared for by the Lord. "There shall not a hair of their head fall to the ground," or perish, is a proverbial expression, often found in Scripture, and signifying that not even the slightest injury should befall the persons spoken of. Many hairs might drop from a man's head, and he never miss them; yet they are all numbered by God, and not one of them falls without him. It is difficult to conceive a stronger declaration of the particularity and kindness of his care over his people. The great God who "telleteth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names," numbereth also the hairs of his people's heads. But then, if the very hairs of their heads are numbered, much more the heads themselves, much more their lives, their souls, their most important concerns. He "numbers their steps"—observes all their movements. He is well aware of all their sorrows. He knows when their "sighs are many, and their heart is faint." "Thou tellest my wanderings," says David: "put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?"

\* Dr Clarke on Matt. x. 29. See Ps. civ. 27-30.

Now, this doctrine of a particular providence is not to be dealt with as a curious speculation; but it is to be lived on, as a doctrine of a most practical and consolatory tendency. Remembering that our success, and very life do actually depend on God, we ought to cultivate a spirit of constant dependence on him, looking to him in all things, and forming all our plans in reference to his disposal, saying, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." But the particular way in which our Lord, in this connexion, wished his disciples to improve the doctrine, was as a remedy against the fear of man, and an incitement to holy boldness. Not one sparrow is forgotten before God; but ye are of more value than many sparrows, and even the very hairs of your head are all numbered: "fear not, therefore." The consideration that God by his kind and particular providence would watch over them, and defend them from all evil, as long as he had any work for them to do, was well calculated to support the apostles, and to inspire them with courage to face all the dangers to which the faithful exercise of their ministry might expose them: and the same consideration, applied to themselves, is equally calculated to inspire all Christ's true disciples, in every age, with a holy boldness in discharging duty and supporting the Christian character, in whatever circumstances they may be placed. But we shall return to the application of this point, after noticing the 8th and 9th verses, which are intimately connected with it, and indeed, only represent it under a somewhat different aspect.

*"Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God."* The confessing of Christ, on the part of the apostles, implied the public preaching of Jesus as the Messiah, and the preaching of his doctrines in purity; for, Peter speaks of false teachers who should "privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction." And on the part, not only of the apostles, but of all his followers, it implied an acknowledgment of Christ as their Lord and Master, and openly speaking and acting so as to show that they adhered faithfully to him in whatever circumstances they were placed. We have said that it was very necessary to advert to this duty, as they were soon to be severely tried. The Jews passed a resolution that if any

man should confess that Jesus was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue; and we read that many of the Jews who believed on him as the Messiah, "would not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." We have already observed, too, that the opposers of the gospel proceeded to still greater extremities against those who embraced it. The martyrs were called confessors, by way of eminence. As an encouragement to his followers to a faithful confession of him, whatever it might cost them, Jesus declared that he would confess them; that is, openly acknowledge them as his own, "before the angels of God," or, as in Matthew, "before his Father who is in heaven," referring to the day of judgment, when, in the presence of his Father and of the angels, and of an assembled universe, he should openly acquit them and own them, and address to them the applauding words, "Well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord."—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." On the other hand, he declared that whoever should deny him before men—that is, should either expressly deny and abjure, or oppose him, in words, or virtually deny him by apostasy, or wilful sin, (for we read of some who know God, but in works deny him)—should be denied by him before the angels of God—should be disowned, condemned, and disgraced, at the judgment-day. He elsewhere informs us that he will then say to such persons, "I tell you I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." It is not, indeed, every denial of Christ that will necessarily bring with it a denial by him at last; for we read of Peter denying him in a most impious manner, and yet obtaining forgiveness; but it is the denial which is persevered in, not repented of, and not pardoned. Neither, on the other hand, is it every confession of Christ that will necessarily bring with it a confession by him at the last; for not every one that saith unto him, "Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven:" it is not the unmeaning, or hypocritical, or temporary confession, but it is the sincere and habitual, verbal and practical confession, which is the result of true faith; it is the confession of which the apostle thus speaks: "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt

believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." What an encouragement to such a confession the assurance of being confessed! and what an argument against such a denial the assurance of being denied, by the Judge of all before an assembled universe!

But let me conclude this lecture with addressing to you at once, an earnest dissuasive from sinful fear, and an earnest exhortation to Christian courage. Courage is a virtue which is either active or passive, and which stands opposed both to fear and to shame; and the courageous Christian is one who is neither afraid nor ashamed, to be, to say, to do, or to suffer, whatever faithfulness to his Lord and Master requires.

Consider here, in the first place, some of the many *occasions* which call for the exercise of this grace, and then some *directions* which will be useful to preserve your courage, and thus keep you from sinful fear.

It requires courage, then, to be able to *withstand persecution* for conscience' sake. By the kindness of providence, we are preserved from the violent kinds of persecution; but should these assail us, (and who can say that such revolutions as might bring them upon us are impossible?) a great trial of our principles and courage would be made, and we should be no Christians if we did not withstand them, though they were even unto death. But, though we are free from such, we cannot escape other kinds of persecution, if we are faithful; for we are assured that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

You will need courage, then, to bear *reproach* for Christ's sake. It is quite impossible that you should altogether escape this, if you act a faithful part. You must endeavour, then, to bear it unmoved, at least unmoved from your steadfastness, though you may feel it deeply. "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation."—"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. Let none of you suffer as

an "evil doer:"—"yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

You will need courage *to act up to your convictions of duty in your own family, and in the world at large.* How much good that might be done in families, is neglected for want of proper courage in their heads! Offences are tolerated, which ought to be checked; and duties are omitted, which ought to be performed. To mention only one of these duties—in how many cases is the duty of family prayer neglected because of a sinful fear and false shame in those who ought to take the lead! Be exhorted, you to whom this idea applies, to rise above this hindrance: fear God more, and man less; and the difficulty will vanish. In society, too, you will need much courage to conduct yourselves aright. You are not, indeed, to be ostentatious; but it would ill become Christ's people to be either afraid, or ashamed, to be thought pious. You ought to witness, in your conversation and your conduct, a good confession before all the witnesses, however many they may be; and you should so demean yourselves, that men may "take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus." Be on your guard, when unavoidably in company with the worldly and profane, that you comply not with their sinful customs, and that you, in no way, deny your Master. Let me recommend this to the serious attention of the young, more especially. Hitherto, it may be, that while you were with your own connexions they have encouraged you to all that was good; but now you will have to mix with those who may seek to jeer you out of your piety and exemplariness of conduct. Lay your account with trials of this kind, act consistently and resolutely, and continue to confess Christ before men.

You will need courage *to resist temptation.* Satan will tempt you; the world will tempt you; and, if you have not care, your own hearts will entice and betray you. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."—"When sinners entice you, consent not."—"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."—"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith; quit you like men: be strong."

Courage is necessary to confess Christ *in the presence of the rich and powerful*, and of all who are exalted above you in station and influence. "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings," said David, "and will not be ashamed."

And what noble courage was displayed by Daniel, and by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!

It may be that some of you will need courage *to venture your life at the call of duty*. You may need it for the right discharge of your business. You may need it to act vigorously in endeavouring to save the lives of others. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works? You may need courage in order to defend your country and your friends: and we know that when duty calls, Christians ought to be ready to "lay down their lives for the brethren."

You will need courage *to resist the mere apprehension of evil*. There are many who are under no present pressure of calamity, who yet torment themselves with the fear of imaginary evils to come. But to all his people Jesus says, with regard to such apprehension, "Fear not." "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The evils you dread may never arrive; but if they should, they will bring their comforts along with them, and your strength will be as your day.

You will certainly need courage *to bear the evils of life while they are actually pressing on you*. Disappointments, losses, sickness, pain, bereavements by the death of friends—all these require true Christian courage, to bear and improve them aright.

And you will need courage *to meet the last enemy in your own death*. That will be one of your greatest trials, as it will be your last: and to bear it with composure will be the finest display of fortitude. To boast beforehand is very easy; but not so to finish your course with joy, and to remain courageous to the last.

Indeed, the grace of courage is essential to the character and safety of the Christian. Not that every degree of fear is fatal. But that degree and kind of fear which leads to renounce Christ is absolutely so. Those who fall by this are "the fearful," spoken of in that passage of the Revelation—"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable—shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

In order, then, to the attainment of this necessary grace

of courage, or, which is the same thing, in order to your preservation from sinful fear, let the following brief *directions* be considered and followed.

Begin with a well-founded *hope in God's mercy*, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without this, though you may be free from fear, you must be exposed to the most awful danger; and therefore, though you may be fool-hardy, you cannot be rationally and scripturally courageous. But, if God be "on your side," as the Psalmist expresses it, then you need "not fear what man can do unto you."

Endeavour, next, after a very firm *trust in God's providence*. Remember that the slightest evil cannot befall you without your heavenly Father, and believe that he causes all things to work together for your good.

Reflect on the noble *examples* of courage which are recorded in Scripture. Think what the Old Testament worthies were able to do and suffer through faith. Think how Peter and John "rejoiced to suffer shame for Jesus' name." Think how Paul said, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die, at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."—"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy." Think of these patterns, and the same truth that supported them will support you.

*Vex not yourselves with fears as to the future*, but give yourselves to the duties of the present. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

Consider *the exhortations and promises* of the Word of God, and have the substance of all, and the very words of many of them, in your memory. They abound to this effect throughout Scripture, especially in Isaiah, and the Psalms. Let one passage suffice here: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

*Think of the confession that awaits you* from the Lord, and the crown of glory which will be yours, at last, if you be faithful. He assures you that he will confess you before his Father and the holy angels: and he says to each of you, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown



of life." Think often of this; and the thought will far more than counterbalance any reproach, or opposition, you may meet with here.

And, finally, mindful of your own weakness, and how certainly both your strength and courage would fail if you were left to yourselves, *be much in prayer* to God for this grace of holy courage. "In the day that I cried unto thee, thou answeredst me," said the Psalmist, "and didst strengthen me with strength in my soul." Pray much to God, then, that he would enable you to be valiant for the truth, and faithful to the end. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord."

## LECTURE LXIV.

## LUKE XII. 10-12.

“ And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven. 11. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”

CONTINUING to address himself directly to his disciples, in the hearing of the vast multitude, our Lord, in the first verse of the passage now read, utters a solemn warning respecting what is called the sin against the Holy Ghost. And here let us consider the nature of this sin—the inevitable destruction which it entailed—and the application of the subject to ourselves.

First, as to *the nature of this sin*, or what it consists in:—the reference to it here is so brief, that it might be very difficult to gather its meaning from this passage alone; but, when we consult the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark, the general import, at least, becomes clear. The passage in Matthew is in the 12th chapter, 31st and 32d verses. Before reading these verses, let it be noticed, that our Lord having just cured a man who was possessed with a devil both blind and dumb, the Pharisees, when they heard it, said, “ This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils;” on which, our Lord proceeded to show the folly of such an idea, and then, in that connexion, added, “ Wherefore, I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” And when we look at Mark iii. 28, we find our Lord, after a similar exposure of the malicious insinuation, expressing himself thus: “ Verily, I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men,

and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:" and then, the evangelist adds, as explanatory of the sin of which Christ spoke, "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." Taking the three accounts together, and especially, considering the concluding words of Mark, "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit," I think it is abundantly plain that the sin against the Holy Ghost consisted in those who actually saw and were convinced of the fact of miracles, imputing the miracles which were wrought by the Holy Ghost, to Satan. Some commentators consider that our Lord referred only to imputing to diabolical agency the miracles wrought by the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit on and after the day of Pentecost: and therefore, that it could not be committed at the time Christ spoke. But others, allowing that there was then a most extraordinary manifestation of power, can see no good reason, in the nature of things, for making such an absolute distinction, and think, as to the accounts of the evangelists, that they all, especially that of Mark, naturally lead us to consider Jesus as speaking in reference to what had just taken place, as well as in reference to what was to happen afterwards.

Jesus declared that this sin entailed enevitable destruction on those who were guilty of it: while every other sin, and in particular, speaking a word against himself, or blaspheming the Son of man, should be forgiven. Many of the Jews were guilty of opposing and blaspheming Christ. They called him a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, and a deceiver of the people; but there is no doubt that not a few of those who resisted and spoke against him at first, were converted and saved. "All manner of sin and blasphemy," said he, with one exception, "shall be forgiven unto men:" not that any sin can be forgiven unless men turn and apply for forgiveness in the appointed way; but the most heinous sins are pardonable which do at all admit of repentance and application to the divine mercy, and will be pardoned to those who repent and believe the gospel. As for the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, however, it could never be forgiven. And why? Just because in its own nature it excluded the possibility of the reception of the only method of salvation. It evidently amounted to a rejection of Christ at the time; and, as it imputed the miracles, even under a conviction of their reality,

to a diabolical agency, it betrayed so confirmed a perversion of reason and feeling, as showed that all means to convert those who were guilty of it would prove in vain, and that God had left them to the obstinacy and hardness which they had chosen.

As to *the application of this subject to ourselves*. In the first place, *What encouragement is there here for the chief of sinners who will only apply for mercy in the appointed way!* Let us not, in the shadow of what is, doubtless, very dark and terrible in this topic, overlook what is equally true, and very bright and delightful. Are there any who, convicted of the sins of their past life, which have been very grievous, are ready to think that they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy, and to say, "There is no hope for us;—we are cut off for our part?"—let them consider the words, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."—"Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him." There is, undoubtedly, mercy for all of you, who are willing to receive it. The blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you from all sin, if it be applied to you. Of this there are most wonderful examples. For those who reviled and crucified him, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do:" and many of them were saved. The apostle Paul says, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Here, then, are striking patterns, and here is wonderful encouragement. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—"I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge your iniquity." Only cast yourselves on the divine mercy, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and doubt not of a gracious reception, seeing he has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Again: *Let no feeble and contrite persons needlessly distress themselves now, as if they had been guilty of this sin.* Experience shows that instances of this alarm occur, from

time to time. Distressed souls are sometimes tempted to think, and to say, that they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy; and not only are not pardoned, but never can be pardoned: and in assigning their reasons for so dismal a thought, they sum them up by declaring, with the deepest agony, that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. But surely, nothing but a most erroneous interpretation of this sin could lead them to fall into so sad a state. We have seen what the sin strictly consisted in; and unless these persons were situated, or at least felt, as the blaspheming Jews at the time of the miraculous operations, it would be most unjustifiable to apply the awful declaration to their case. Such persons should also consider that all hasty, erroneous, and even blasphemous thoughts and expressions against the Holy Ghost himself, did not then, and still less do now, necessarily amount to the unpardonable blasphemy here spoken of. For example, Simon the sorcerer was surely guilty of sinning, in one sense, and to a heinous degree, against the Holy Ghost, when he offered money for his miraculous gifts, and when Peter said to him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right with God." And yet the inspired apostle did not consider Simon's case hopeless, or his sin unpardonable; for he said to him farther, "Repent therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." But Peter would not have spoken thus, if Simon's sin had amounted, in malignity, to that of which we are treating: for, the apostle John says, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that ye shall pray for it." We conclude, then, from Simon's case, though there is much reason for deep humiliation, there is no reason for absolute despair of forgiveness, even in many blasphemous thoughts and expressions relating to the Holy Ghost. Let persons who are tempted to such despairing thoughts, remember this. Let them also consider that the persons of whom Christ spoke were of a very different spirit, indeed, the very opposite spirit from them; for, instead of being afraid of such guilt, or being overwhelmed with grief and terror, or considering Jesus as a true Saviour at all, or having a long-ing desire for salvation through him, they were at ease in their minds, they were quite callous, and they derided him as an impostor. It is difficult to conceive two cases more

completely dissimilar. It is quite certain that none who go so far as to acknowledge the divine mission of Christ, and desire salvation through him, can have been guilty of what is here called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Those who are most afraid of this sin, are commonly in least danger of it; and those who with agony express their conviction that they have been guilty of it, prove decidedly, by that very agony, that they have not. This awful declaration never did, and never could, extend to any, except to those who were guilty of what amounted to obstinately, perseveringly, and maliciously rejecting and opposing the gospel, under the most favourable circumstances. Let no awakened persons, then, write bitter things against themselves, or meditate terror, because of anything that is said in Scripture on this subject; seeing their very awakening, working as it does, is of itself a sufficient proof that they are mistaken in the application they are making of this to their own case. Let them rest assured that the door of mercy is open to them, if they have not already entered in by it. Let them rest assured that even their sins which lie more directly against the Spirit of God, whether in the way of quenching, or grieving, or even rashly blaspheming him, do not amount to the unpardonable blasphemy, but being felt as they are, come under the designation of the "all manner of sin and blasphemy" which may be forgiven. And therefore, instead of brooding any longer over their fancied hopelessness, let them look to God for strength to rise superior to their fears, and to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ. Thus shall they obtain, in the testimony of a pacified and purified conscience, a delightful proof that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him.

Once more here: *this subject warns all whom it may concern to beware lest, though they do not, perhaps because they cannot, commit the very same sin as to its circumstances, which is here described, they be guilty of what must have the same fatal result.* For one that distresses himself with the thought of having been guilty of the unpardonable sin, there are multitudes who are living in a state of unconcern, and contented rejection of the gospel. Of these, some, like these Pharisees, acknowledge the facts of the miracles, but deny, or fail to embrace the doctrines, and neglect to practise the duties that flow from them: and it is too plain to need any lengthened proof, that, whatever may be the

exact nature of the deception under which they labour, and of the iniquity they indulge, those who continue, to the end of their life, in an unbelieving and unconverted state, cannot be forgiven. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin to which it is applied; but it cannot cleanse from that sin to which it is not applied. God is merciful; but if the appointed way of mercy be disregarded, mercy cannot be had. No man cometh to the Father, but by the Son; and no man can say, in light and faith, that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost; if, therefore any man will not come to God by that way, and will not welcome the Spirit's aid, he cannot have life. Here, then, at least, as all of you must acknowledge, is now the unpardonable sin, namely, final impenitence. Beware, all ye who are now living in a state of present unbelief and impenitence, beware of all farther approaches to final unbelief and impenitence. If you go on to sin against information and conviction, and to exercise deliberate and malicious opposition to the truth, you will come peculiarly near to the very letter of the dreadful case here described. The description we have of this sin is, perhaps, intentionally involved in some obscurity, in order that men may be very much on their guard against it: but remember that mere delay, though the circumstances of that delay may not be aggravated, is an approach to final impenitence. Every moment you continue in your present condition brings you nearer and nearer to that point, at which, if you are found at last, there will remain for you no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain and fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour you as adversaries. According to every new opportunity you fail to improve, every new call you disregard, every new conviction you stifle, so is the probability increasing that you will never turn, and never be saved at all. O think aright of this, and follow up the thought. Do not presume to neglect and oppose the Spirit of God any longer, lest, in righteous judgment, he give you up, and strive with you no more, and cut you off suddenly, or leave you to die in your sins. Venture not a step nearer the brink of this dread ruin; but stop, and turn instantly. There is no safety for you but in immediate compliance with the divine call: "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?"—"To-day, if you will hear God's voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation," lest "God swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest." God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the true Jehovah,

is now ready to receive, and pardon, and renew you : yield to him without more delay, and you shall not only escape the impending judgment, but shall obtain salvation with exceeding joy.

Verses 11 and 12: "*And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing, ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*" The advice and promise contained in these verses were very suitable to the disciples, many of whom were soon to be called before Jewish and Roman courts of various kinds, for the sake of Christ. A similar address was made to them on a former occasion, as appears from the 10th chapter of Matthew, and was repeated once more at least, as we find in the 21st chapter of this Gospel. Plain and illiterate, as the disciples generally were, they would be ready to be much alarmed at the thought of appearing before civil and ecclesiastical rulers and judges, not only from the apprehension that they might be condemned, if they did not plead their cause aright, but still more from the apprehension that from some failure in judgment, or memory, or eloquence, on their part, the cause of the gospel might suffer—which was dearer to them than their life. Their Lord, therefore, wisely and graciously counselled and encouraged them in that prospect. "Take ye no thought," said he;—not that *prudent* thought was unbecoming, or that they were to be rash, and speak unadvisedly with their lips: but they were forbidden to take anxious, perplexing, and disquieting thought, as the word might be rendered, and as he said on another occasion, "Take no thought for the morrow." Such thought as that, at the time they were speaking, would have argued distrust in God, and would have thrown them into such confusion as would have incapacitated them from speaking as they ought. They were not to be studious of making a fine appearance: nor were they to be apprehensive that the Lord would allow, either them to be put to shame, or his own cause to suffer. Nay, as spoken to those who were under the influence of plenary inspiration, these words forbade them to spend time in premeditation on their defence of themselves, or on their declaration of the gospel: for it is thus expressed, in Mark,\* "Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate."—"Take

\* Mark xiii. 11.



ye no thought," as it is in Luke, "how, or what thing," that is, either as to the manner or matter of what "ye shall answer," or say in defence of yourselves; "or what ye shall say," that is, what ye shall say in declaring the truth before your accusers and audience, be they what they may. And, to encourage them to this, he assures them that the Holy Spirit would suggest to them, at the time, whatever was proper to be said, and would direct and strengthen them to say it in the best manner. Now, all this is often exemplified very strikingly in the Acts of the Apostles, in which we read of several of the disciples being carried before different courts, where they trusted in God, and had this promise so fulfilled to them as to enable them to speak, and in every way to conduct themselves, in the most becoming and noble manner. Suffice it to refer to the following cases, for it would take a considerable time fully to quote them:—the case of Peter and John before the Sanhedrim, or chief counsel, in the 4th chapter—the case of Stephen before the same counsel, in the 6th and 7th chapters—and the case of Paul before Gallio, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, in the 18th, 24th, 25th, and 26th chapters, and before Nero, 2 Tim. iv.

As to the application of these words to the succeeding ages of the Church:—it becomes all Christians, and especially Christian ministers, neither presumptuously to abuse them, nor unbelievingly to neglect the legitimate encouragement which they contain. *It would, certainly, be a gross perversion of this passage, if any preachers were now to imagine that it would countenance them, in ordinary cases, in coming forward to preach without previous study.* Now that miraculous inspiration has ceased, they have to seek their knowledge from the Word of God, and in the way of diligent, persevering, and prayerful application of mind; that they may bring forward abundance of suitable matter, in the best way of which, all their other duties being considered, they are capable. Whatever might be the rule in cases of emergency, even the inspired teachers themselves were required thus, to "stir up the gift of God that was in them:" and therefore, much more is such diligence necessary in those who have no such inspiration. It is no difficult matter, indeed, for a man who abounds in self-confidence and readiness of expression, to speak often and long, in a certain way, of the things of God, with little or no preparation: but it is a poor boast to boast of such a habit; it

is a poor compliment to the intelligence of his audience, to indulge it; there will be no need for him, or his admirers, to proclaim that his effusions are extemporaneous, for, that will be but too evident. In many cases, this is, doubtless, under the guise of zeal, the refuge of indolence; and it would be well for him, to consider whether he be not labouring under an error in imagining that there is any thing peculiarly spiritual, or praise-worthy, in offering to God that which costs him nothing. The words which were addressed to inspired Timothy, are surely at least as suitable in this view, to ordinary teachers: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." In a different sense, David "prepared with all his might" "for the house of his God."—"Because the preacher, too, was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs." If due diligence be not used, to expect the help of the Spirit is not faith, but presumption.

At the same time, there is much *direction and encouragement here to ministers, when they are in the way of duty.* The spirit of this passage teaches them, not to fail to declare the will of God, when they are suddenly called on to do so in the course of providence. They are not to hang back, or to hesitate then, but are to discharge the duty in the best way they can, under God. On extraordinary occasions, they may expect, though not miraculous, yet extraordinary assistance. They may expect that their strength will be as their day; that their Master's grace will be sufficient for them, and that his strength will be made perfect in their weakness. Instances have occurred in which they have been unexpectedly called on, and have been enabled to go through the duty with much comfort and success. Proper ideas and expressions have flowed in upon them as fast as they could utter them, and have been rendered effectual to their hearers. Nor need they be afraid to speak, in any circumstances, however trying, or dangerous, into which their Lord brings them. This passage of the history of Moses is not without a permanent lesson: "Moses said

unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.\* Making allowance, too, for the difference between an inspired prophet and common teachers, the words of Jeremiah† are very encouraging: "Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth." Nor less instructive and encouraging is the case of Isaiah.‡ When he had seen the glory of the Lord, and had heard the seraphim praising him, he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips:" he looked on himself as lost and helpless, unworthy either to join the seraphim in praising the Lord, or to proceed to declare his will to the people. "Then flew," continues Isaiah, "one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sins purged." Having thus obtained the assurance of his pardon and acceptance, as well as divine assistance for his work, the heaviest burden was lifted off his mind; and then, when he heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for me?" he was ready to reply, "Here am I, send me." How heavy the work of declaring salvation to others, and of confessing Christ before men, for those who have themselves never been, like Isaiah, both cast down and lifted up! The taking away of their iniquity, in the reality of pardon, and also the sense of pardon, are necessary to their speaking with confidence and comfort, either to God or for God. Happy they, who, having felt that they were undone, have obtained, from the true altar of atonement, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, to keep their heart and mind through Christ Jesus!

\* Exod. iv. 10.

† Jer. i. 6.

‡ Isa. vi.

When the Lord bestows on them the joys of his salvation, and upholds them with his free Spirit, this works wonders in enabling them to teach transgressors his ways, that sinners may be converted unto him, and in opening their lips, that their mouth may show forth his praise.

This passage also encourages ministers to expect and pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost to teach them, in the act of studying the Scriptures, what they ought to say, and to guide them to the true understanding of them. It reminds them, too, that when they have done their best to prepare themselves, they need not, and should not, be filled with such anxiety as would distress them, or impede their work, but may, and should go forward to it, trusting to his influences to assist them, and to bless what they have to say. "Such trust have we through Christ towards God," says Paul; "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

But these two verses are also *very instructive to all professing Christians*. They teach them, for example, to look on what was spoken by the apostles and other inspired men, as spoken, not so much by them, as by God himself. The Holy Ghost taught them, and spake in them. "David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me." If "holy men of God," then, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," you see in what light their words are to be regarded, and with what faith, and love, and obedience, they ought to be received by you.

Again, you are here called on, by just inference, to distinguish between inspired and uninspired teachers. You are not to expect, or desire, that your teachers should take it upon them to speak and act as if they had miraculous gifts of inspiration. You ought not to suppose that they can furnish solid and well-digested instruction without time and labour. "Every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man who is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." Besides, this subject reminds you that your teachers need

the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable them to speak aright and with success; and, therefore, it should lead you to remember them in your approaches to the throne of grace. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of God may have free course and be glorified."

But, in reference more immediately to your own demeanour—though prudence and holy jealousy over yourselves are becoming, there is no cause why you should take anxious, perplexing, and distrustful thought, as to how you should speak and act. If you hold fast the doctrinal principles, and take due care to be well-informed as to the duties of the gospel, the Spirit of God will guide you in every emergency. Should you even be called before earthly rulers and courts for the gospel's sake, you would have no occasion to fear. "O Nebuchadnezzar," said the three Hebrew youths, "we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Many confessors and martyrs have spoken and acted with equal magnanimity in later ages; and none have any reason to fear that, when the time of trial comes, they will be deserted by him in whom they trust.

But, though nothing of this more fierce kind of temptation come upon you, you will be tried in your fidelity on many common occasions. You will have to witness the good confession before many witnesses, in your ordinary life and conversation. Desire to express yourselves always as you ought: but be not too thoughtful, be not over anxious. Beauty needs no adventitious ornament, and gold needs no gilding: so it is with the cause of Christ, with true religion; it needs none of the enticing words of man's wisdom; its glory cannot be increased—its value cannot be enhanced by man's invention. Maintain the truth just as it is—maintain it by word and action, plainly and boldly, and it will speak for itself. Do not thrust yourselves forward vainly, or out of your own place; but, when you are called by duty, when you are put forward by Christ, decline not the honour, be not diffident of him or of his cause. "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you,

with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." If you trust in God to teach you what to say, because you are sensible that you cannot order your speech by reason of darkness, he will teach you, and he will give you wisdom and faithfulness. The Lord God will give you the tongue of the learned, that you may know how to speak a word in season; and each of you may say, "The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

## LECTURE LXV.

LUKE XII. 13-21.

“And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? 21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

WHILE our Lord was addressing himself directly to his disciples, in the hearing, and for the instruction, of the multitude who had assembled near the house of the Pharisee with whom he had been dining, and while he was teaching his disciples how to conduct themselves when they should be called before magistrates and powers for his sake, he met with a very unseasonable interruption. “*One of the company,*” or, as it might be rendered, one of the crowd, “*said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.*” As none of the other evangelists mentions this circumstance, we know nothing more of the character of this man than may be gathered from what is here said by Luke. It appears from Deut. xxi. 17, that the Jewish custom, sanctioned by divine authority, was, that a man’s inheritance was divided among his children, so that the eldest son had a double portion. Whither this was the elder or the younger son does not certainly appear, though it seems probable that there were just two sons in the family, and that this was the younger. Nor is it certain whether this man was applying in order to receive what was merely his due, and what was unjustly and covetously withheld from him, or, in order to

get what was more than his due, such as an equal division of the property would have been. In any of these suppositions, there was a fault somewhere, and sufficient ground was laid for the warning Christ afterwards gave against covetousness. The man wished Christ to speak to his brother—that is, to speak with the authority of a judge—to tell him, in a way which would be effectual, to divide the inheritance with him according to the proportion he wished.

Our Lord positively declined to interfere in the affair, saying, “*Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?*” Christ was, indeed, King of kings, and Lord of lords; by him kings reigned, and princes decreed justice; and he could, with perfect ease, and unerring rectitude, have settled this dispute. But he would not do any thing which could give any handle to the rulers and judges to say that he was usurping their office; he had no such express appointment by human authority as would have been necessary, according to the common opinion of men to have warranted his acting as a judge; and therefore, he would not interfere. The words which our Lord here employed, seem to be in allusion to what we thus read of Moses,\* “When he went out,” “behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?” The two cases are by no means exactly parallel; there is, however, a similarity to a certain extent; and our Lord may have intended to signify, that, if he had judicially determined the dispute submitted to him, the same objection would have been made to his conduct as to that of Moses.

The Word of God, my friends, affords men direction in all the circumstances of life, inasmuch, at least, as it contains general rules which may be applied to particular cases. It principally treats of spiritual topics; but most of these are such as bear on the concerns of common life. Its doctrines and duties are interwoven; and those who are guided by its dictates, are fitted for acting their part rightly in this world, while they are preparing for a better. The incident which it here records, affords a good illustration of this, as will appear from the following remarks which the history naturally suggests.

1. *Injustice and quarrels between near connexions, regarding the property of deceased relations, are very unseemly*

\* Exod. ii. 13.



*and unchristian.* It sometimes happens that the head of a family, or a very near relation, is no sooner laid in the grave, than the survivors, who expect to benefit in their substance by his decease, begin to strive about what he leaves behind him. How unbecoming, in the very face of such a memento of the vanity of earthly things, to be carried away by the desire of having, and that in such a way as to overlook the ordinary proprieties of life! Common feeling, not to speak of any higher principle, should at least teach them to keep such disputes to themselves (if they do at all arise), and not to outrage decency by making them public. Those who are so situated ought to avoid selfishness and injustice, to study each others' interest, and to pay particular attention to the more dependent, who should feel, on their part, that various kindnesses may be shown to them, as a matter of favour, which they have no room to claim as a matter of right; and all concerned ought to be ready, in every matter of doubt, to yield to the opinion of the wise and disinterested.

2. We may remark, from this passage, that *those who have any property to leave behind them should be careful timeously to settle their affairs, by a latter will, so that justice may be done, and disputes prevented, after they are gone.* In some cases, the law of the land may be sufficient to divide an inheritance as justice and a man's own reasonable inclination might desire. In most cases, however, there would be room for litigation; and in many cases, especially where there is much property, something that equity, or mercy requires, will be neglected, if there be no distinct testament. How far a man is at liberty to consult his own particular wishes on such an occasion, independently on the general principles of nearness of kindred, which are usually observed, is a very difficult question. No particular rules can be laid down to meet every case. The Christian should consult conscience, the Word of God, and, perhaps, also a judicious friend or two. No doubt, great injustice is often done in this way, by following out prejudices, and partialities, to the neglect of some who have a good claim on consideration. Mere caprice can never justify men in overlooking near relations, or those who have been long and remarkably serviceable to them, who are dependent on them, or stand in need of such aid: nor can that be justly considered as true charity, which is left to some public object, however useful in itself, when near relations, in a

state of destitution, are forgotten. Where the property is great, something, more or less, according to circumstances, should be done for charitable purposes, even when there are heirs of the nearest relation to inherit the bulk of the property. Where there are no near connexions in a dependent condition, certainly a rich man is more at liberty to look abroad on society at large, and may feel himself in the way of duty, and may act very wisely and benevolently, not only in being ready to every good work, and giving with his own hands very freely while he lives, but also, in ordering his affairs so that the cause of religion and humanity shall be assisted by the greater part, or a large part, of his property, when he is gone. In all cases, men should consider themselves as accountable, at least to God, for the faithful discharge of their stewardship; and they should take care to settle their affairs, not only equitably and wisely, but also, in such a distinct manner as may effectually prevent disputes, and fulfil their just and benevolent intentions.

3. *The Gospel of Christ does not interfere with civil rights, or human laws.* No doubt, it is intended, and fitted, to influence them indirectly, for, every thing ought to be managed in a way consistent with its holy precepts; but it gives no countenance to its adherents to disregard existing institutions, or to usurp the places assigned to others. Dominion is not founded on grace. The provinces of civil and ecclesiastical government are quite distinct. Not but that they may, and should, be so managed, as mutually to assist each other; but still, their office is distinct, and relates to quite different things. The civil power must not presume to usurp the office of Church government and discipline; nor must the ecclesiastical rulers presume to exercise the office of the judges, or wield the sword of state. Christ's followers must not, merely on the ground of being his followers, pretend to what he himself did not assume. He is the greatest of princes, and his gospel is the most powerful of dominions; but the influence he exercises by it is over the minds and hearts of men, not over their bodies and their property; or, at least, if he influence these latter, it is not by direct interference, but through the medium of the former. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate, therefore, said unto him, Art

thou a king? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."—"The weapons of our warfare," said Paul, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Once more here, *this passage is unfavourable to ministers engaging in secular business, and especially, in public civil offices.* Even where the object is one of pure benevolence, and not likely to excite a prejudice against those who engage in it, but rather calculated to endear them to all parties, the appointment of the deacons in the Acts of the Apostles, to take care of the poor, that the twelve might not leave the word of God to serve tables, but give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, proves that ministers ought not to get so involved in the management of temporal charities, as would, in any considerable degree, interfere with their own proper duty of promoting the spiritual good of the people. Still more obvious, however, is the impropriety of their engaging in what is not so plainly benevolent, or, in what, though it may be useful and acceptable to some, must disappoint, and is therefore very likely to displease others. Should the business of arbitration, in order to prevent law-suits by private settlement, be thought an exception, a careful perusal of the first part of the 6th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in which that point is treated, will show that ordinary members, and not the public teachers of the Church, are to be looked to chiefly for that very useful work. As to their formal appointment to the office of magistrates, or judges, few things can be more improper.\* Nor ought they to act a prominent part in any thing which, in reference to the passing affairs of life, might fairly subject them to the imputation of being, in any undue degree, party-men. Like other men, they must be supposed to have their own opinions; but it is only where conscience, enlightened by the Word of God, requires it, that they should take any active part. Those who undertake to propose to sinners of all parties the humble and self-denying doctrines and

\* Surely the appointment of ministers as justice of peace is very objectionable.

duties of the Gospel, have prejudices enow to encounter, without needlessly exciting more. Nor ought any secular business, or any amusements, to be engaged in by them, which would, in any hurtful degree, withdraw their hearts, or their time, from their sacred functions. "No man that warreth," says Paul to Timothy, "entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."—"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them."

But, to proceed with the passage before us;—though our Lord declined interfering in the dispute, he, according to his usual custom, took occasion, from the application which was made, to suggest most important instruction to his hearers. As it was certain that covetousness, in one of the parties at least, if not in both, was the cause of the dispute, he laid hold on the circumstance to found on it a strong general caution against that sin. "*He said unto them,*" that is, to the whole crowd, as well as to his disciples, "*Take heed, and beware of covetousness.*" The word rendered covetousness, signifies having, or rather, the desire of having, more, that is, more than what is our own, or, more than Providence allots to us: and we are also guilty of covetousness, if we set our hearts chiefly on the things of this life, and make them the object of our supreme, or very anxious, desire, however honestly we may conduct ourselves. This caution Christ enforces, first of all, by the following reason, "*For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*"\* This is plainly true of the life of the soul, or man's immortal interest. The wealth of the whole world has no value in reference to salvation. "We are redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Let no man, therefore, dream of putting his property, or any application of his property, however apparently charitable, or pious, in the room of the free grace of God, flowing through the righteousness of Christ, received by faith. But this assertion is also true of the life of the body, or temporal life. A man's life consisteth not, or is not dependent on, abundance, nor is it secured by it. The mere continuance of his life is dependent, not on super-

\* Non possidentem multa vocaveris

Recte beatum: rectius occupat

Nomen, &c.

Hor. Carm. lib. iv. 9.

Τα ἀγαθὰ ἰζω μὴ ζῆτις: ἰν' αὐτοῖς ζῆτις: εἰ δὲ μὴ, οὐκ εὐζήσις.—  
Epicl. iii. 7.

fluities, but necessities. It is certain, too, that no wealth can prolong a man's life, when the appointed time of his removal is come. The grim messenger will not be bribed away from doing his office. The rich cannot purchase a reprieve then, either for themselves, or for their friends. These words in the 49th Psalm, are to be understood in this literal sense, as well as in reference to salvation: "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever) that he should live for ever and not see corruption." The *credit* of a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth: for, wealth, abused to impiety and profligacy, becomes the means of elevating some to a conspicuous pinnacle of shame, while, in the midst of virtuous poverty, many are truly respectable, in the eyes both of God and of man. Nor, while this life lasts, does even the *happiness* of it depend on such abundance. No doubt, there are various comforts which wealth can purchase, and which are not to be despised; but too much value must not be attached to them: much more is generally expected from them than experience justifies. There is much more comparative temporal enjoyment in the lowlier walks of life, where good principle and good conduct prevail, than the votaries of this world's riches and honours imagine. Temperance is favourable to health, and labour, to good spirits and to repose: and there are a thousand cares to vex the ambitious and the high, to which the contented and the lowly are strangers. Where there are the renewed and humble heart, trust in Providence, the hope of glory, and domestic peace, there life is truly happy, much more happy than in the gayest scenes of fashion and irreligion. "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."—"Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices, with strife." So says the wisest of men: and with him agrees the Psalmist, "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." Wealth, in many cases, is accompanied with much care and trouble: and it is, even in the most favourable cases, altogether insufficient to give satisfaction. "I had great possessions of great and small

cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me," said Solomon, "I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, and of the provinces:" "and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy."—"And, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." A pious spirit of dependence on the providence and grace of God, is necessary to the enjoyment of temporal life, and to the very existence of spiritual life; "for a man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Still farther to illustrate and enforce the caution he had given against covetousness, our Lord spoke the parable of the rich fool. The case supposed in this parable, it is important to observe, is by no means one of the worst. The man is not said to have got his riches by oppression, extortion, or fraud; neither is he said to have been what we call a miser. He had extensive grounds, which, by good management, we must suppose, and the blessing of Heaven, were very productive in general, and which, in this particular season, had borne a peculiarly luxuriant crop. So abundant was the produce, that he found it could not be contained in the barns he already had. The proposal he made will appear more natural, if we suppose it was the custom, as it is still in some of the southern parts of this island, not to build any of the produce of the fields in the open air, but to stow up the whole at once in barns. For such a practice, large barns are necessary. This man, therefore, proposed to pull down his present houses, and to build larger barns and granaries, which would be sufficient to contain all the produce of the year, and also, all the remaining corn of former years, and other fruits and goods which he had already accumulated. And he proposed, after that, to cease entirely, or in a great measure, from the cares and labours of husbandry, and every other business, and to give himself to indulgence in the use of what would be sufficient for many years. Now, there is nothing which is uncommon in this, or which, at first sight, may appear very bad. "The character here drawn is exactly that of a prudent worldly man, who rises from inferior circumstances to great affluence, by assiduous industry and good management, and then retires from business to spend the latter part of his life according to his own inclinations."\* Is not such a case of frequent occurrence?

\* Scott.

are there not many who, though they have not attained, are aiming at this? and are there not multitudes who would consider such a consummation as the very summit of their ambition, and the height of earthly felicity?

But observe this character more minutely, and see how its black traits appear one after another. First of all, there was here no acknowledgment of the power and bounty of the Most High, who rendered the ground fruitful, and in whose hand it was to give wealth; and therefore, there was here a degree of impiety, amounting to virtual atheism. Again, there was here no proper sense of responsibility to God for the right us of the property, no sense of the duties of stewardship, no regard to the maxim that to whom much is given, of the same much will be required. Hence, there was no consideration how the glory of God and the good of man might be promoted by all this abundance. He spake of his fruits and his goods as his own, saying, "*My fruits,*" and "*My goods,*" in a way that overlooked God's property in them. He said, with anxiety, "*What shall I do?*"—he was perplexed; and the poorest beggar, who knew not what he was to have to-morrow, could not have been more disturbed. What shall I do!—were there not many important services, and good things he might have done with all this wealth? Might he not have thought of the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow? Or, if he was to store up, which might have been useful to a certain extent, why speak of storing "*all*" his fruits and goods? might not part have sufficed?—surely to speak of laying up all, was very bad. And then, the base selfishness which was here! for the man's thoughts turned only on himself, and his own mean gratifications: "*Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*" This was the language of the Epicurean: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."\* This was addressing his soul, as if it had no capabilities, nor prospects, beyond those of the beasts that perish. Here was no wish to find happiness in God, but a desire, and an expectation, of ease and happiness without him. What inconsideration was here, too, of the instability of human affairs! It never occurred to the man that if he were to

\* "Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas."

Ὡς οὖν ἐστ' εὐδὲ ἱστῶν

καὶ πινε, καὶ κυβησε, &c.

Anacr. Od. xv. 11.

Epictetus thus addresses the Epicurean, καθυδὲ, ἰσθὲ, πινε, δὲ γκε.

continue his endeavour after wealth, the next year might not be so prosperous as this, and his hopes might be blasted: neither did he consider that, if he were to give up all business, the wealth he had actually acquired might be destroyed or spoiled, or violently taken from him in some revolution of affairs. And then, what presumption to resolve on all this absolutely, counting on the continuance of his life and comforts, independently on the will of God! How presumptuous to reckon, in any way, on many years to come, when he was not sure that he would live, and when the event showed that he did not live, to see the light of another day!

While the man was indulging his wild reverie, and addressing himself in this impious soliloquy, "*God said unto him*"—in the language of parable, God may be considered as saying, or expressing in words, what he actually does—"God said unto him, *Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then, whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*"—"Thou fool!" How different the judgment of God, from the judgment of the world, with regard to wisdom! A man, such as we find described in this parable, would be generally considered as a sensible, prudent, and well-doing man. To be wise to gain wealth, is esteemed, by most people (judging by their conduct, if not by their profession), as the chief wisdom; and the actual possession of wealth seems, as it were, to make a man wondrously wise, and to give great weight to his opinion. It is not thus, however, that the Lord judges. He who can so rest in his possessions as to neglect his soul, is pronounced, by an unerring authority, to be a fool, whatever sagacity he may discover in other respects. And, surely, this judgment is according to truth; for, what folly can be greater than for a man to neglect his chief interest, and so to miscalculate, as to value an unsatisfying and perishing, higher than an all-sufficient and everlasting good? Such is the infatuation of the world, that they are even heard, at times, to represent a supreme regard to the soul's salvation as a proof of weakness and folly. But Jehovah declares, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding;" and every wise man will think with him. The Psalmist\* thus describes the folly of the worldlings, and of the admiration with which they are too commonly regarded: "Their inward thought

\* Ps. xlix. 11.



is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations: they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless, man, being in honour, abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings."—"Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: for when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul (and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself), he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

"Thou fool"—"thy *soul* shall be required of thee." It is his soul which is required; his immortal soul is called away from his body, to be condemned to endless misery. It is *required*—it is positively demanded. The believer resigns his life cheerfully—he yields up the ghost: but the sinner dies reluctantly—his soul is forcibly taken away. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" But the original word, exactly rendered, is, *They require* thy soul;—they, that is, probably, the fallen spirits; for, as when Lazarus died, he was "carried by the angels," doubtless the holy angels, "into Abraham's bosom," so, it is supposed, on the other hand, that the fallen angels, or devils, are employed as messengers, to require, and carry away the souls of those who die in sin: a very dreadful thought, too dreadful indeed to be dwelt on. *Thy* soul is required "of *thee*," thine own soul of thyself; and no ransom, no substitute, will be accepted. Thy soul is required "*this night*," this very night. No reprieve is allowed; "he dieth in his full strength, being wholly at his ease and quiet." He dies forthwith, suddenly, in the very midst of his impiety and folly, and without time for reflection, or repentance. How awful! and yet how common! "*Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*" Those fruits, and goods, and riches, thou hast so carefully heaped together for thyself, whose shall they be, when thou art gone? Perhaps, he cannot conjecture, or his expectation may be frustrated. "Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them." Or, if they go to his children, or near relations, that can afford him but little comfort, when they cannot prevent

him from dying in misery, and may be abused, and prove a curse to those who are to inherit them. "Yea," said Solomon,\* "I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; because I shall leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man, or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour, wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity." "Whose shall those things be?" At all events, they shall be no longer his: they can no longer afford him any succour; he must leave them all behind him.

Such is the parable; and Jesus himself gives us the application of it, in these words, "*So is he,*" so is every one, be he what he may, and however inoffensively and respectably, in human estimation, he may manage his affairs, so is he "*that layeth up treasure for himself,*" for his own sake, for his own pleasure, for increasing his own consequence, for making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;—"and is not rich toward God," with respect to God, or, in a spiritual sense; who is not rich in faith, and piety, and good works—who has no treasure lodged, so to speak, in the Lord's hand, and therefore, sure and everlasting. Every such person is like the man in this parable: he is a fool, his life is vanity, and his end will be destruction.

This, then, my hearers, is the leading exhortation which this passage calls on me to address to you, "*Take heed and beware of covetousness.*" And do not suppose that there is no need to address to you such an exhortation; for, the temptation to the sin is great, and its influence very common. You will find it necessary to be on your guard against it during the very time of the public services of the sanctuary; for there is no doubt that thoughts of worldly goods and worldly gain may intrude so as to prevent all benefit from these services, and even turn them into impiety. Take warning from these words in Ezekiel: "Also thou son of man, the children of thy people are still talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for

\* Eccles. ii. 18.

with the mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." But if covetousness may intrude on you, even in the hours of devotion and religious instruction, much more is there a danger of its creeping on you on common occasions. The feeling of the advantages and comforts unquestionably connected with a competency, is too ready to pave the way for a dangerous and sinful preference of temporal to spiritual things. Be entreated to beware of covetousness, whether consisting in too great anxiety in getting, or in covetousness in keeping.

Various arguments may be urged against the indulgence of this sin. It is of a most insinuating nature, and therefore to be most carefully guarded against. It is unreasonable, unjust, and unmerciful. If this passion be given way to, it can never be satisfied. "He that loveth silver," says Solomon, "shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." Instead of being appeased by getting, the thirst will be increased. The spirit of covetousness is inconsistent with peace, and breaks the rest. It has been remarked, and the remark is well worthy of consideration, that covetousness is unprecedented in the Scripture history of believers. "One, indeed, spoke unadvisedly with his lips; another cursed and swore; a third was in a passion; and a fourth was guilty of adultery and murder: but which of the saints ever lived in a habit of covetousness?" And, be it remembered, that, according to Col. iii. 6, "covetousness is idolatry," and one of the things for the sake of which "the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." The essence of idolatry consists in the departure of the heart from the living God; and is not this such a departure? is it not forsaking the Lord, and making a god of gain? Let the judgments be considered which have come on such characters, in this life—for example, on Achan, who coveted and took the goodly Babylonish garment, the two hundred shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold, and hid them in his tent; and on Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part of the price of the land. And let it be considered how this sin shuts men out of the kingdom of heaven, and entails judgments on them for ever. Alas! there is reason to fear that many perish utterly, because of the unrestrained indulgence of this sin; and that much loss is incurred, because of its partial indulgence, by many believers who are not altogether its slaves. Consider well, then, whether some of you be not guilty in this respect. No

longer load yourselves with the thick clay which may destroy you, or, at least, greatly impede your steps towards heaven.

And think not, ye who are poor, that your poverty is a security against this sin. Covetousness consists, not in the actual possession of riches, but in the disposition in reference to them. A man may be very rich, and very generous: and so, a man may be very poor, and very covetous.

This passage, however, certainly speaks more particularly to those of you who are prospering in your substance. It loudly warns you to repent, if you be thriving in your property, but in a state of carelessness and ungodliness. "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you." Let those who are prosperous, but not entirely given to covetousness, be aware of their danger. "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!" What hindrances lie in his way! Beware of being proud of your substance, or of valuing yourselves highly because of it. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." Beware of setting your affections on your wealth. "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them."—"Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away, as an eagle towards heaven." Be thankful to God for the good things he has given you; and honour him with them, by a proper use of them. If they increase much, do not lay up *all*, nor nearly all; but become liberal in deeds of piety and charity, according as God has prospered you. Let your abundance be a supply for the wants of others. Do not trust in your riches; but trust in the Lord, and do good. "Charge them that are rich in this world," says Paul to Timothy, "that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

And finally, whatever be your situation, or circumstances, seek to become possessed of the true riches, even "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and hold yourselves in readiness

to leave the world and its possessions. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." Be sensible of your spiritual poverty, and receive with cheerfulness the true riches. Say not that you are "rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing"—"for you are wretched and miserable and poor." I counsel you to buy of Christ, "gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich." Do not foolishly and presumptuously calculate on many years, or days, here; but remember that you may never see the light of another day: and ask yourselves, each of you, Where would my soul be to-morrow, if it should be required of me to-night?—May the Lord give you the right understanding, and personal application, of these things; and to his name be praise. Amen.

## LECTURE LXVI.

## LUKE XII. 22-31.

“And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. 24. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? 25. And which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? 26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? 27. Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

THE attentive reader of Scripture will perceive that not only the substance, but most of the very words, of this passage, are recorded as having been spoken by our Lord on a former occasion, namely, in his sermon on the mount, as we find in the latter part of the 6th chapter of Matthew. Though in Jesus Christ were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and though he poured out his instructions in wonderful variety, yet, we repeatedly read of him saying the same things on different occasions. He knew what circumstances required this, and what were the points which it was especially necessary to press on men's attention. “God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet,” too often, “man perceiveth it not.” We require to have “line upon line.”—“To write the same things to you” (says Paul), “to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” The instructions in these verses came in very appropriately after what our Lord had been saying to the multitude on the subject of covetousness. Led on by what one of the company, or rather crowd, had said to him about dividing an inheritance,

Christ, though he declined to interfere, addressed to the whole multitude a caution against covetousness, and enforced that caution by the parable of the rich fool. In the verses now before us, however, he addresses himself more immediately to the disciples, to those who habitually waited on his ministry, especially the twelve. And whereas what he had said before was more particularly calculated to meet the dangers of that kind of covetousness to which the rich were most exposed, what he now says is more particularly calculated to obviate the anxieties which are more ready to beset the poor, or at least, those who are in lowly and not very prosperous circumstances. Addressed, too, as these words are, to his own disciples, they are characterized by the most affectionate tenderness.

"*And he said unto his disciples, Therefore,*" because of the uncertainty and insufficiency of earthly things, "*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.*"—"Take no thought," is too feeble a rendering of the original, which signifies, Be not distressingly anxious, or, Take no perplexing thought.\* We can never suppose that our Lord intended to inculcate what may be called thoughtlessness or carelessness. It is true that the affairs of time, of this life, and of the body, are much less important than those of the soul and of eternity; but still, they require a considerable degree of attention, and cannot be neglected without sin, and without injury to the spiritual state. There is, certainly, incumbent a prudent attention to the preservation of our own life, and to the acquisition of those things which are necessary for the body; for, "no man," in the right exercise of reason, "hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." Diligence in one's calling is also plainly incumbent: "This we commanded you," says Paul, "that if any would not work, neither should he eat: for we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies." It is a man's duty diligently to provide for his family and dependants, as well as for himself; for "he that provideth not for his own, especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." A man ought to manage his affairs with discretion; he should consider well what he can afford, that he may not go beyond his income, and injure others, and involve himself in difficulties—he should see

\* So in verse 11.

that no bounty of Providence be wasted—he should avoid needless expense, that, if he can, he may have some provision for sickness and old age—he should attend to personal decency and comfort, in food and dress, according to his station—and, if he can do so without infringing on the duties of integrity and benevolence, he should try to make some provision for those who may be dependent on him, when he is gone. At the same time, there is great danger of this being carried too far, so that the affairs of this life shall usurp the chief place in the heart. It is plain that this caution of our Lord is transgressed when men have recourse to any unlawful means of preserving or increasing their substance, or procuring even the necessities of life. It is transgressed, too, when means which are in themselves lawful are prosecuted with too great eagerness, so as to preclude due attention to spiritual things, or hurtfully distract the mind. It is sinful to be wrapped up in secular concerns at present, and it is sinful to be distrustful of Providence as to the future. Let a man be in the way of duty, and he has no occasion to distress himself with anxious cares as to future supplies. Undue anxiety and distrustful thoughts are unbecoming, even in reference to what is necessary as to food and clothing, and much more in reference to luxurious pampering and show.

Our Lord proceeds to enforce this caution against sinful and anxious care, and to encourage his disciples to trust in Providence, from a variety of considerations. First of all, he pleads the experience of greater favours already received. "*The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*" The life is certainly more valuable than the food by which it is supported, and the body than the raiment with which it is clothed. If, then, God has formed the body itself, and maintains it in life, may he not be trusted too for supporting that body in life, as long as he sees it fit? Should not he who has done the greater, be trusted in for the less? See here, then, believers, a principle which, if properly followed out, would prove an antidote to all your anxieties. It is not merely God's having formed your bodies, and given and maintained your natural life, but it is all his past goodness to you that you have to consider, and especially his goodness to your souls, his unspeakable love shown towards you through his Son. He has, indeed, as we have frequent occasion to remark, done more for you already than he has ever to do again, in reference either to your



spiritual or temporal wants: and, therefore, you should not distrust him now, either as to the one or as to the other. He who has done the greater favours to you, when you were his enemies, will surely do the less favours when you are his friends. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—"God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

The second consideration against anxious thoughts, which our Lord advances, is, God's care over the irrational animals. "*Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn;\* and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?*" God's care over the lower animals is repeatedly noticed in Scripture. "Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat."—"The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God"—"The earth is full of thy riches, so is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great"—"These all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good." They are supported without forethought, and generally without labour. The following extract from the Rabbins, is curious and appropriate: "Hast thou ever seen a beast that had a workshop? yet they are fed without labour, and without anxiety. They were created for the service of man, and man was created that he might serve his Creator. Man also would have been supported without labour and anxiety, had he not corrupted his ways. Hast thou ever seen a lion carrying burdens, a stag gathering summer fruits, a fox selling merchandise, or a wolf selling oil, that they might thus gain their support? and yet they are fed without care or labour. Arguing, therefore, from the less to the greater, if they which were created that they might serve me, are nourished without labour and anxiety, how much more I, who have been created that I

\* Οἷς οὐκ ἔστι ταμίον (locus secretior, ærarium), οὐδὲ ἀποθήκη (horreum). Lightfoot thinks that the former word means a storehouse for fruits, and the latter a storehouse for grain.

might serve my Maker? What therefore is the cause, why I should be obliged to labour in order to get my daily bread? Answer, sin."\* Thus, though God does not exempt his people from diligence to procure a livelihood, surely the consideration of his care, even for the fowls of heaven, should preserve his people from all distrust as to their own supplies. "He teacheth them more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh them wiser than the fowls of heaven." They are far superior in dignity and destiny, and, therefore, are far more the objects of his care. Look, then, believers, on the birds of the air, proverbial for their cheerfulness, whose species are preserved, though they are early deserted by their dam, and beset with many enemies, and destitute of your wisdom, and of much less value than you; and behold what should assure you of safety and all needful supplies of the bread that perisheth, and of the bread of life. Look on them, and learn to trust in God for this your daily food; thus shall you "dwell on high, your place of defence shall be the munition of rocks: bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure."

The third consideration which our Lord urges is, the unavailing nature of all such anxiety. "*And which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?*" It is quite certain that, however desirous any person might be to become taller, no anxiety after it could make any addition to his height. The word rendered "stature," may also be rendered "age," there being a connexion between the one and the other, in so far that some idea may, in early life at least, be generally formed of one's age from one's stature or height. In this sense of the word, too, it is equally plain that no man by taking thought could add to his age; for, not to insist on the doctrine of there being an appointed time for man on earth, great anxiety after life and anxious thought of every kind must tend to impair a man's health, and, of course, to shorten his life, instead of lengthening it. It has been often observed that the same words are sometimes employed to denote a measure of extension, and a measure of time. "Teach me to know mine end, and the measure of my days," says the Psalmist; "Behold thou hast made my days as an handbreadth." A cubit is here put, proverbially, for any small portion. Men's utmost anxiety cannot make the least addition to their

\* Dr A. Clarke on Matt. vi. 26.

stature or age. And so it is in general; prudent management is incumbent, and may likely be useful; but as to anxious and distrustful thoughts, they cannot add even the least to temporal prosperity, but are rather injurious to it. Therefore, why should men distress themselves, as if they could, by such anxiety, gain the greatest objects, when they cannot gain by it the least? Let this argument, then, be considered by you likewise. All your sinful anxiety will be useless, and worse than useless: vex not, then, yourselves in vain; but follow the path of duty, and leave the result, without distrust, to Him who can do for you both the least and the greatest favours.

The fourth consideration which our Lord brings forward as a remedy against anxiety of every kind, and particularly against anxiety with regard to clothing, is drawn from the vegetable kingdom, from the flowers and the grass of the field. "*Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.*" The great men, and especially the kings of the East, were often arrayed in very magnificent apparel. Thus, "Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple."\* Though we have no particular description of Solomon's dress, yet we read† that when "the kings of the earth sought his presence, they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment;" and that when the queen of Sheba saw, among other sights, "the apparel of his ministers, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her:" we may be sure, therefore, that his dress was very splendid. If it was of white, or chiefly of white, the lily was well selected to represent it. But, beautiful as it was, it is surpassed in beauty by the lily of the field, which has a softness, an elegance, and a richness, which art cannot rival. Man may, indeed, imitate the beauty of God's works, yet they ever leave him far behind. Our Lord thus applies this reference to the lilies, "*If then, God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?*" The word rendered "grass," may be so extensively understood as to include, not merely what we usually call grass, but more generally "herbs." Or, taking

\* Esth. viii. 15.

† 2 Chron. ix. 4, 24.

it literally for grass, the structure of grass is very beautiful; and, unlike human workmanship, however fine, the more minutely grass, or any vegetable, is examined, the more exquisite it appears; instead of losing, it gains wonderfully, when viewed through a microscope. But the grass and the flower of the field are also proverbial for being tender, and short-lived, and soon withered. "In the morning," says the Psalmist, "the grass flourisheth and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withered." "As the flower of the grass, he shall pass away," says James; "for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, than it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth." In the East, where fuel is scarce, they are said still to heat their ovens with dry straw, stubble, and withered herbs. We see, then, what are the circumstances on which this argument is founded; and as to its application, that is obvious. Nothing but weakness of faith, with which we frequently read of Jesus charging his disciples, could occasion them distressing anxiety as to how they were to be furnished with clothing.

These two verses, though not spoken chiefly with that view, contain an exposure of the folly of pride in clothes. It is right that men should be attentive to decency, cleanliness, and propriety, in their clothing; but, extraordinary nicety (which, by-the-by, is as likely to prevail where there is great care to avoid changes of fashion, as where they are naturally followed), and also all extravagance, and all excessive and unsuitable ornament, are doubtless wrong. Though Scripture does not prohibit all ornament in dress, it certainly inculcates moderation, and teaches that the chief ornament should be, not that outward adorning, or putting on of apparel, but the hidden man of the heart—the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. And then, suppose a man or woman, gorgeously apparelled; how little is there to be proud of, because of that in which he or she is outshone by the perishing flowers of the field! Nay, did not the necessity of clothing arise from our fall from God? what, then, are our garments, rightly considered, but monuments of our shame, and constant lessons of humility?

But, these two verses are more immediately intended to chide God's people out of their anxieties, and to encourage them to trust in him. Look upon the lily, O believer, in its downy whiteness, and upon the grass, in its robe of green;

and let the sight, so refreshing to the outward eye, also recall to thy remembrance thine own privileges, and refresh thy heart with the assurance that He who paints the lily with its downy whiteness, and casts over the grass its robe of green, will much more clothe thee.

Verse 29: "*And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink:*" that is, do not make these things the object of eager, and chief pursuit. "*Neither be ye of doubtful mind.*" The Greek word\* expresses the situation of meteors in the air—clouds, for example, which are restless, and driven about with every wind. "Any speculations and musings, in which the mind fluctuates, or is suspended in an uneasy hesitation, might well be expressed by such a word."† My friends, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, and whatever thoughtlessness may prevail in their minds for a time, they who have no confidence in the grace and providence of God, are subject to a most distressing unsteadiness. They are like the flying clouds, or troubled sea, that cannot rest. But a composed and settled spirit, which will stand inquiry, is essential to your happiness. Be entreated, then, to settle yourselves on the foundation laid in Zion, for safety to your souls, and in connexion with this, to depend habitually on God's good providence. In the language of Isaiah, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

A fifth consideration against such earthly desires and anxious pursuits, is presented to us in the example of the heathen and men of the world, to which Christians ought not to be conformed: "*For all these things do the nations of the world seek after.*" Be unrenewed men what they may, be they heathen idolaters, or nominal Christians; all of them intensely seek after ‡ worldly objects, such as these. "They who are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh:"—it is only they who are after the Spirit, who are regenerated, that mind the things of the Spirit. All natural men are inquiring, "Who will show us any good?" any temporal good. Here is the argument, Gentiles and all who are strangers to the covenant of promise, and the hopes and consolations of the gospel, are supremely seeking meat, and drink, and clothing—worldly gratification, and knowing no better, their choice is not to be wondered at: but Christians have higher

\* Μεταεργίζεσθαι.

† Doddridge.

‡ Ἐπιζητεῖν:—ἐπι intensivum.

privileges, views, and hopes; and therefore, such conduct is quite unworthy of them. My hearers, it is the essence of heathenism and of irreligion in every form, to live for this world: and it is the essence of true godliness to live for the other. Say for which of the two you are living.

A sixth consideration against sinful and distressing anxiety about earthly things, even the necessities of life, is stated by our Lord, in these beautiful words, "*And your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*" What an endearing and encouraging view of God! He is the Father of his people—not only their Creator and their Preserver, but their reconciled Father, who loves them as his own adopted children resembling him; and of whom we have this description, that "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He is their *heavenly* Father, and therefore more able, and more ready to help them, than any earthly father. This is the endearing title by which we are encouraged to address him in the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, when we are taught to say, "Our Father who art in heaven." And what should prevent any of you from coming to him in that character? It is true that you have sinned against heaven, and in his sight, and are no more worthy to be called his children: yet he is ready to receive you back into his family, and every barrier to your return is removed out of the way; say, then, each of you; "I will arise and go to my Father."—"Wilt thou not from this time cry, Thou art my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" You, at least, who have already returned to him, will feel the endearing and powerfully encouraging nature of this relation; "for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Mark, too, the idea that your heavenly Father *knows* that ye have need of these things—knows what things are necessary for you. He who knows all things, takes a peculiar and gracious cognizance of the affairs of his own people, and is especially concerned to help them in all their troubles, and to supply all their wants. The words addressed to Israel, by Moses, are always applicable, in their spirit, to believers: "The Lord thy God knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." The mere fact that your heavenly Father knows what you need, is very encouraging; but when you add to his knowledge his love and his

power, you may perceive the certainty of his giving you all that is needful. As our Lord says elsewhere, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him:" but if you do ask, you have a positive promise that he will help you. When even an earthly father listens to the application and supplies the wants of his son, "how much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask him!" In the language of Paul to the Philip-pians, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches and glory, by Christ Jesus."

The passage before us concludes with an exhortation to seek a nobler than an earthly object, and a promise that if we do so, less important things will be granted also: "*But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.*"

Observe here, in the first place, what we are to understand by "the kingdom of God;" the great object which we are exhorted to seek. The kingdom of God signifies, both the kingdom, or reign, of God in the blessings of the gospel on earth, and the kingdom, or reign, of God, in the perfection of holiness and happiness in heaven. These are inseparably connected; and the phrase is used in its true and proper meaning, when it is used to include both. The possession of the blessings of the kingdom of glory on high, pre-supposes the possession of the blessings of the kingdom of grace on earth. Hence, in the parallel passage (Matt. vi. 33), the words are, "Seek ye" "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Now, the righteousness of the gospel is imputed, inward, and active. If you would become possessed of the kingdom of God, then you must receive the righteousness of God, the righteousness appointed and accepted by God, even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the ground of your acceptance with God, as your title to the kingdom, "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." You must obtain, also, that inward righteousness which consists in being renewed through the Word and by the Spirit, after the image of him who created you; for "except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And you must cultivate all the graces, and habits of holiness, which constitute the reality of the reign of God here, and the fitness for his presence hereafter.

Observe, next, what is implied in *seeking* the kingdom

of God. Seeking the blessings of this kingdom implies that you feel your need of them, that you have a just value of their importance, that you fix your attention and desires upon them, that you diligently use the outward means of attaining them, and that you sincerely, and decidedly, and perseveringly follow after till you actually find them. This may also signify seeking the peace, purity, prosperity, and extension of the gospel.\*

Observe, thirdly, what is implied in "*rather*" seeking the kingdom of God, or, as it is in Matthew, seeking it *first*. It implies that you seek it first, or rather, in point of *importance*; judging it to be of much more value than any worldly advantages whatever. You are not prohibited from considering other things as of some importance; but this must be your grand object. You must be able to say, with Paul, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,"—"that I may win Christ, and be found in him." In connexion with this, seeking the kingdom of God rather, or first, implies your seeking it more earnestly, and with greater exertion, than any thing else. "Labour not" (that is, comparatively) "for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." And seeking the kingdom of God first, or rather, implies that you seek it early, and first in point of *time*. Do not say that you will attend to your salvation afterwards, but that you have other things to settle first. Begin with the most important. Say not, "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;" for, no time can be so suitable as the present. If you delay here, the opportunity may be lost for ever.

Consider, lastly, the *promise* by which this exhortation is enforced; if you seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, rather than meat, and drink, and clothing, "*All these things shall be added unto you:*" you shall obtain the kingdom, you shall have salvation of course; and not only so, but all these necessities, all desirable temporal things, in so far as they are real blessings, in so far as they are for God's glory and your good, shall be given you over and above, shall be thrown in along with these more valuable gifts. Think of Solomon, who, when God said said to him, "Ask

\* Ps. cxxii. 9: "Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."



what I shall give thee," asked "a wise and understanding heart," and who obtained that, and along with that, what he did not ask—riches, honour, and length of days. Think of the widow of Zarephath, who, of the little remaining meal she had, made a cake for Elijah first, and after that made for herself and her son; and think how her store was therefore blessed. Think how, as appears from Haggai, the Jews were visited with famine and distress, when they neglected the temple work and offerings; and how prosperity smiled on them, when they attended to their religious duties. Think of the words of the Psalmist: "O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."—"The Lord God is a sun and shield; he will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Think of the words of the apostle: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Especially, think of the words already quoted, and how they connect all these blessings with the gift and reception of Jesus Christ: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Let these brief hints, on this rich verse, suffice. See here, all of you, where lies your true interest, both for time and for eternity. Sinners! if you desire your true good, seek that good with which all other good is connected. Believers! keep fast hold of the blessings of the kingdom of God; for, this is the way to secure, and to enjoy present good. The exclamation of a certain poor man over his very homely fare may seem to reverse the order of this promise, but it was the natural, and beautiful, and grateful result of looking at the same truth from another quarter:—"What! all this, and heaven besides!" Be thankful, brethren, for every past blessing; and do not dishonour God by worldliness and sinful anxieties as to the future. "Cast all your care upon him, for, he careth for you."—"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

## LECTURE LXVII.

## LUKE XII. 32-34.

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

THE pastoral life is an employment to which poetry has been indebted for much of its most pleasing imagery, and on which the mind dwells with uncommon serenity and delight. Removed from the busy haunts of men, the shepherd is conceived of, and is, in a good measure, free from many of the wants, cares, envyings, disputes, crimes, and sorrows, by which the life of others is imbittered. With considerable leisure, and in peaceful meditation, he tends his fleecy store, on the verdant hill or plain, or by the banks of the crystal stream. For the perfection of such a life, however, he must enjoy a more luxuriant country, and a finer climate than ours. Now, in such a situation were the Jews placed in the promised land. Their wealth consisted principally in their flocks and herds, many of the people were employed in tending them, and, in those ages of simplicity, even those who were of property, and were looked up to as men of note, did not disdain to engage in this humble employment, as it is now considered. It also, probably, added considerably to the respectability of this occupation, in the eyes of the Israelites, that their justly admired David was called, from holding the crook, to sway the sceptre. These circumstances being so, it is not wonderful that Scripture contains so many allusions to the pastoral life. Hence, the appellation of shepherd is, by a beautiful and easy figure, transferred to rulers and commanders of the people. The Lord said of Cyrus, “He is my shepherd.” Hence, too, the appellation of pastors, or shepherds, is given to the ministers of religion. “I will give you pastors,” saith the Lord, “according to mine heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Hence, the same name is

applied to the Lord God. "The Lord is my Shepherd," saith the Psalmist. Hence this designation is repeatedly given to the Redeemer. "I am the good Shepherd," said he. And hence, he designates his own people as his sheep, or his flock. "*Fear not, little flock,*" says he, in the first words of the passage under consideration; "*for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"

Let us, on this verse, consider, first, *how Christ's people come to be his flock.*

His people, then, are his flock, *by the express appointment of God.* He did not assume the office of Shepherd of himself; but he held it by the designation of his Father: "I will set up one Shepherd over them," said the Lord by Ezekiel, "and he shall feed them, even my servant David," that is, the antitype of David, "he shall feed them, and he shall be their Shepherd." In like manner it was positively determined, in the divine counsel, that he should have a flock. It was not left a matter of uncertainty, whether any should put themselves under his guidance; there was no possibility that his undertaking should prove in vain: for, the Eternal made his covenant with the Shepherd, as representing the sheep, and chose them both at the same time, if time it could be called, when, as yet, the world was not, and when the covenant was from everlasting. Hence, Jesus says, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me."—"I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me."

But again, Jesus Christ has got himself *a flock by the purchase of his atoning death.* A great obstacle lay in the way of his getting a flock. Mankind, without exception, had forsaken God, and incurred a sentence of condemnation and banishment. In vain would it have been for any to have undertaken this office of shepherd of men, if he had not been able and ready to remove guilt, and effect their reconciliation. Thanks be to God that such a shepherd is ours! "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." No sooner had he humbled himself, than he laboured under the severe effects of imputed guilt. They pursued him, almost continually, in sad variety of unparalleled woe. Satan tempted, and man blasphemed. Having made every opposition, during his life, which malice could suggest, they resolved on one grand, combined effort,

for the complete overthrow, as they imagined, of his cause. Nothing short of his death would satisfy them. Wonderful to tell, God himself seemed to favour, in this respect, their design! The Shepherd himself, too, knew that unless he sacrificed his life, he could not save his sheep from destruction. "He loved them, and," therefore, "he gave himself for them." "I am the good Shepherd," said he; "the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—"Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd." Now his enemies had their wish; for their eyes saw his crucifixion, and the earth drank his blood. But, though when the Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were, in the literal sense, and for a season, scattered, it was in consequence of his being smitten, that "the Lord turned his hand upon the little ones," to shelter and save them.

Farther, Christ has got himself a flock *by actually bringing his people into his fold*. Our Shepherd not only opens the door, by his meritorious obedience and death, but proceeds, by his grace, to incline and enable them to enter; that is, he, by his Spirit, applies the benefits of his purchase, giving light, faith, repentance, pardon, peace, and every blessing. Mark his love;—he came "to *seek* and to *save*" those who were lost. He follows them, so to speak, through the wilderness, and over the mountains of vanities, where they wander; and, having found them, he leaves them not, till, by all the eloquence of his love, and by the power of his Spirit, he brings them into his fold. Being the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," in the divine purpose, and in retrospective efficacy, he was employed in this benevolent search, long before his appearance in human form. Soon as man was expelled from paradise, did the Shepherd begin to court his return. In every age he had some success. Many who had not received the promises, except in believing prospect, were, nevertheless, the happy objects of his tender care. During his personal ministry on earth, he showed himself most earnest to bring in sinners. If any thing can convince you of the difficulty of this work, and of the extreme depravity and obstinacy of the human heart, it must, probably, be the consideration, that he who spake as never man spake, was unsuccessful with the generality. Still he had a flock. "My sheep," said he, "hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me." Alluding to the greater success of the gospel afterwards, he said, "Other

sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring in, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." This one fold is just the true Church. By means of his ministers, and all his converting ordinances, he has brought in, and is still bringing in, multitudes. Nor shall his zeal decline, till he has accomplished all his pleasure. The time is hastening on, when his flock shall be prodigiously increased. Thus saith the Lord, "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth."—"I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim." From all the winds of heaven they shall crowd to this Shepherd, as the centre of their happiness and affection. His flock, however, are by no means so numerous now, as this would imply: far less were they so at the time he spoke the words now under consideration.

This leads us to consider, secondly, the designation here given of Christ's people as a "*little*" flock. They were, plainly, but very few in number, at the time Jesus was speaking. When he "came to his own, his own received him not." But, the same thing has held true, more or less lamentably, in every age of the world. How few pious persons were there at the time of the flood! How low was the state of religion at different subsequent periods of the Old Testament history! Even after our Lord's ascension, the number of the disciples that assembled in Jerusalem, was only about a hundred and twenty. It is true that the number of the flock has been much increased since, and it may be considered as great now, when compared with what it was then, and, as already noticed, it will hereafter be amazingly increased: but, it is as true, that it is yet small compared with the world lying in wickedness. The words of the prophet may be here applied: "Gleaning grapes shall be" left, and found "in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five, in the outmost fruitful branches thereof." But, is not this a very affecting circumstance? Let it be considered, not as a point of dry arithmetic, or of dogmatical and uncharitable condemnation of others, but as a melancholy fact, that should awaken yourselves. Is it so that Christ's flock

is a little flock? then the way of the multitude of mankind is not the way for you to follow if you would be saved, but you must follow the way of the peculiar people. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

But let us consider, thirdly, the encouraging exhortation here addressed by Christ to his little flock, "*Fear not.*" Distinguished as man is, over the lower animals, by forethought, he is thereby often rendered needlessly unhappy, by too great anxiety to secure the good he desires, and to avert the evil which he dreads. The scope of this whole passage is to discountenance such anxiety and fear; and here Christ expressly forbids his own people to give way to them. There are several things of which believers are, at times, afraid, which yet they have no reason to fear.

They have no reason to fear *want*. This is what the previous connexion of the words more particularly shows that our Lord here intends. He had been cautioning against sinful anxiety about what they should eat and drink, and how they should be clothed; he had assured them that their heavenly Father knew that they needed such things; and then, after exhorting them to seek first the kingdom of God, and telling them that, if they did so, all these things would be added unto them, he says, "*Fear not.*" His flock have no occasion to fear that he will suffer them to want what is necessary for their bodies, or souls. It is one of the offices of the good Shepherd to feed his flock. In the course of his providence, he will support them: "their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure:" and, as we formerly observed, they shall, in general, have whatever degree of worldly prosperity may be conducive to God's glory and their own good. Nor will he fail to supply them with the bread of life. He will feed them with the various blessings of the gospel covenant. "He that cometh unto me," says he, "shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

But want is not the only thing which they may be ready to fear: they may fear the *various other afflictions and calamities of life*; and yet they have no reason to fear them. Not but that they are subject to the common trials of life, and are sometimes exposed to trials peculiar to themselves: but they have no occasion to be overcome with terror at the

thought of them, nor even to deprecate them any farther than may be consistent with their Father's will. He will keep them from all troubles that would be injurious to them, and he will assist them, and bear them safe through those through which he has determined that they shall pass. "The Lord is on my side," says the Psalmist; "I will not fear what man can do unto me."

Nor need Christ's people fear that they shall be overcome by their *spiritual enemies*, or be left to fall finally from grace. They are, indeed, beset with many spiritual dangers, but they have a mighty and faithful helper. They are like "sheep in the midst of wolves," or in a land of wild beasts; for, their "adversary the devil, is going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." But their Shepherd will defend them; and Satan "shall be bruised under their feet shortly." It is true, also, that their own hearts are weak, and would soon cause them to wander away to their ruin; but, though they ought to be jealous over themselves, and keep their hearts with all diligence, they have no occasion to dread that they will be so left as to depart entirely and finally from the fold. They may forget, for a season, the necessity of remaining constantly under the guidance of their Shepherd, and may set out in search of pasture where it is not to be found. Unhappy thus to stray along barren mountains, and among dangerous pitfalls and poisonous herbage, forgetful of the place of safety, and of the pastures wholesome and ever green! If left to themselves, they would never find their way back. If the Shepherd abandoned them, they would continue to wander off for ever. But he who brought them in at first, also brings them back. *They* may be contented at a distance, but *he* is not. Peter denied that he belonged to the fold, and, in so doing, for a season wandered from it; but no sooner did he behold the piercing look of Jesus, and feel the gathering arm of his grace, than he wept bitterly, and returned, so to stray no more. Such, also, has been the experience of many of Christ's flock: and it is not easy to say whether grief or joy should then predominate in their minds.

Nor, these things being so, need they fear *death*. To them, the last enemy should appear as stripped of his terrors; and each of them may say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and staff they comfort me."

Nor, finally here, need they fear *coming short of heaven*,

*and being consigned to endless misery.* It is true that they are all, in themselves, still deserving of condemnation: but, there is no condemnation to them as they are in Christ Jesus, and walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and therefore, they shall obtain final salvation. Now, this is what our Lord himself declares, and subjoins, as the great reason why they should not fear, and this let us consider, fourthly, "Fear not, little flock,"

"*For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" The kingdom of God, thus spoken of, includes the blessings of the gospel here, and of heaven hereafter. With regard to the former—these are already bestowed on all true believers, in the sense of actual possession: with regard to the latter—they are given to them in reversion, the title to them is made over, and they are the certain consequences of the former, and very much of the same nature with them. Grace has been said to be glory begun. We are told that "God is not ashamed to be called their God," the God of believers; "for he hath prepared for them a city." They shall "inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world." Their final salvation is secured. Speaking of them under the figure of a flock, Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and no man," none, "is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

We must observe, too, the force of the word "*give.*" Salvation is not of merit, but of grace. It is of God's sovereign and free favour. "The free gift comes on them to justification of life:" and hence, while "the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The expression, "It is" his "good pleasure," is very full of meaning and emphasis. It includes two ideas—purpose and pleasure: in other words, it teaches us that it is the determination of God to bestow the kingdom on Christ's flock, and also that it is his delight to do so. The same word is used in the original, where it is said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" and, "It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rom. xv. 26.



In the former passage, the word is always understood to be very expressive; and in the latter, it implies, not merely that they did contribute, but that they contributed with cheerfulness and delight. And, is it not a most encouraging idea that the Lord has not only purposed to save his people, but that their salvation is that on which his heart is set, and in which he has great delight?\* How beautiful and gracious the words, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing!"

As to the application of this blessed truth, in the way of a reason against fear in Christ's people—it is very obvious. If he has not only already bestowed on them such spiritual blessings, but has graciously determined to bestow on them the kingdom of heaven; then, they need not fear that he will neglect them, in the meantime, in his providence; nor, need they fear that any thing will occur to separate them from his love: for, surely, the bestowing of the kingdom of heaven presupposes the continuance of all the grace which is necessary to prepare and preserve them for it.

And now, what need of many words, in beseeching you to apply this verse to yourselves? If the views which it thus presents, on its very face, do not impress you, it is hardly to be supposed that any thing additional will. Do consider whether you belong to the flock of Christ, or to the herds of the world. His flock are separated from the world, they are inclosed, they hear his voice, and they follow him. If this cannot be said of you, then you are none of his. We cannot say to you, Fear not; for, on the contrary, you have every thing to fear. Perhaps you may be placed above the fear of want in this world; but you are, in the meantime, on the way to the utter want of all that is desirable, and to that state in which you will not be able to obtain "a drop of water to cool your tongue." Do not flatter yourselves that your number will secure your impunity; for, "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." If you do not place yourselves now, and if you are not found at the last day, under the guidance and protection of the good Shepherd, you must be placed among the goats on his left hand, and driven, for ever, from his presence. By all the alarming considerations connected with that tremendous day, be persuaded no longer to keep

\* See Eph. i. 5; Phil. ii. 13; 2 Thess. i. 11.

at a distance from his fold, or to refuse, or neglect, to enter it. And yet, for love's sake, we rather entreat you. We entreat you who have hitherto refused to come in to the fold, and also you who are wandering from it, to contemplate, with unprejudiced minds, the captivating character of this Shepherd, and the precious privileges of his flock; and to come to him in the full persuasion, that, whatever you may have been, whatever you may have done, and wherever you have been straying, he will receive you graciously. Hear, and believe, and act on his own words, "If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the wilderness, and seek that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine that went not astray." Let him have this joy, then, of you.

And, as for those of you who belong to Christ's flock by having been brought home to it by conversion—Fear not. Nay, rejoice in your privileges and prospects; go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock, continue under the immediate guidance of your Shepherd, obey his voice, follow whithersoever he leads; then shall each of you be able to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake."—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Verse 33: "*Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.*" It is probable that this injunction was heard by many who were converted on the day of Pentecost, and that it influenced them, and others who had been converted before, to that generous conduct which is thus described: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." This was, doubtless, very affectionate and beautiful; and it appears to have been useful in their peculiar circumstances, occupied almost entirely, as they were, with religious duties, and many of them being far from home. Their conduct, indeed, is not now to be followed exactly as to its letter: they acted thus

of their own accord, induced by the circumstances and feelings of the day, and rather by permission, than by any express command. At the same time, the noble and disinterested principle is to be acted on by Christians, according to the necessities of the times in which they live. We are not to look on the injunction, "Sell that ye have, and give alms," as giving any countenance to the idea of a man's voluntarily denuding himself of all his property, and reducing himself to poverty and beggary, as if that were in a remarkable degree acceptable to God. What more absurd, or unchristian, than the Popish toleration and encouragement of mendicant friars—lazy, useless, self-righteous, beggars? What our Lord here says is to be considered in connexion with what goes before. Instead of worldly anxiety and an undue desire to accumulate, he enjoins, not only trust in providence, but liberality to the poor. He teaches his followers, that, instead of resembling the rich fool, in laying up "all their fruits and goods" for themselves, they should sell what was not needful for themselves, in order that they might have wherewithal to assist those who were in need. And this charitable appropriation of their wealth to others, he assured them, was the true way to secure it to themselves. As to money, this would be to deposit it, not in a bag, or purse, with holes, or where it might be stolen, but safely: and as to fruits and goods, this would be, not hoarding them up in barns on earth, where, in process of time, they would spoil, but depositing them in heaven, or employing them so that, as to their consequences and benefits, they would last for ever.

We must not, for a moment, suppose that this is to teach that the charitable application of our property will be meritorious, so as to purchase heaven, or any the least favour of God; for, all we have is God's already, whether we feel it and confess it, or not; and who would ever be so foolish, in any other case, as to think of purchasing any article from a man with his own money? But, God graciously promises what we never could claim as a right; and, certainly, what he promises may be depended on. Let us remember, too, that, in order to be accepted of God, our alms must flow from faith, supreme regard to the will of God, and real benevolence to man: for, it is possible to give all our goods to the poor, and yet to be destitute of charity, of true Christian love. On right principles, let us attend to the duty of liberal alms-giving, according as God has prospered us;

assured that our bounty will not be lost to ourselves, but that the words will be fulfilled to us, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." "Charge them that are rich in this world," says Paul to Timothy, "that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." It was the saying of a very charitable man, on his death-bed, that what he had kept to himself he was about to leave behind him, but what he had given away he was to carry with him.\*

"For," adds our Lord, in enforcing the exhortation to provide treasure in heaven, "*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" The truth of this, as a general proposition, is unquestionable. Whatever men regard as their treasure, or chief good, whether in possession, or in prospect, on that will their hearts be chiefly fixed, and by that will their conduct be chiefly determined: hence, it is of great importance that they should form a correct judgment of what they ought to esteem as their treasure, or chief good. Worldly men look on worldly possessions as their treasure, or chief good; therefore, the tenor of their thoughts, desires, conversation, and actions, has a reference to them. Where a worldly man has deposited a treasure of gold and silver, thither will he frequently repair, to see if it be all safe, and to gratify himself with the sight of it. Or, if he cannot get to see it, he will be often thinking of it. A Latin author† introduces a covetous man as expressing himself thus, "I am here; but my heart is at home, that is, with my money." But neither in possession nor prospect, does the Christian's treasure, in the highest sense of the word, or his chief good, consist in worldly things. His treasure is in the Lord God himself; it is in the possession of the blessings of God's love on earth, as connected with the prospect of his presence in heaven. Hence, he often actually betakes himself, in prayer and meditation, to his

\* Callidus effractâ nummos fur auferet arcâ;

Mercibus extractas obruet unda rates;

Extra fortunam est quicquid donatur amicis;

Quas dederis, solas semper habebis opes.—*Martial.*

† Plautus. "Nam ego sum hic; animus domi est, scilicet cum argento meo."

God; and his desires, his words, his pursuits, have, on the whole, a reference to spiritual and heavenly things. "Our conversation," says the apostle, "is in heaven."

In conclusion, then, be exhorted to improve this declaration, in the way of trial, and in the way of direction. Improve it in the way of *trial*, or self-examination. Do you wish to know whether you have an interest in the gospel salvation, and, of course, a well-founded hope of heaven?—examine and determine where your heart is; for there, be it where it may, your treasure is also. If your hearts are set, if your chief desires and pursuits terminate, on earthly things; then, you have no reason to think that you have any treasure in heaven. You are of those who "mind earthly things;" and you "have neither part nor lot in this matter." If, on the other hand, you look on all earthly possessions and concerns as only of secondary importance, and have pleasure in casting forward your thoughts on heaven's holiness; then, you have, in this, one good evidence that the treasure of gospel blessings is yours already, and that an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved for you in heaven.

And then, as to *direction*:—let this declaration lead those of you whose hearts are set on earthly things, to perceive the folly of this, and to pray that the Lord, by his grace, would turn away your heart and eyes from viewing vanity, fix your affections on the true good, and give you, for his Son's sake, an interest in the better and enduring substance. And let it remind those of you who really have your portion in God, and your treasure in heaven, to avoid an earthly, covetous, and grovelling spirit and conduct; and habitually to direct your thoughts, desires, and actions, with a reference to that better country, in which your most valuable possessions lie. "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. So when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

## LECTURE LXVIII.

## LUKE XII. 35-48.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; 36. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately. 37. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, That he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. 41. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? 42. And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? 43. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 44. Of a truth I say unto you, That he will make him ruler over all that he hath. 45. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; 46. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

THIS is a long passage; but the subject of it is one, and that subject is so fully and clearly explained, that several of the verses will require no observations. In the preceding verses, our Lord had been exhorting his hearers against sinful anxieties while they were in this world; and he now proceeds to exhort them to prepare for another. We are to consider ourselves as creatures of time, and of eternity; above, we have directions for the former, and here we have directions for the latter.

Let us begin with what is essential to the understanding

of the whole passage, and that is, noticing what we are to understand by "*the coming of Christ*," of which it speaks, and for which it exhorts us to be ready. The coming of Christ sometimes signifies his coming in providential judgments, especially at the destruction of Jerusalem; but, though it was applicable in principle to that event in this place, it must be understood in such a sense, and so extensively, as to be applicable to all persons, and in all ages, and yet, in so exact a sense, as to imply an immediate and particular reward to every one of Christ's faithful servants, and an immediate and particular punishment to every one of his enemies. The commonly received, therefore, and, unquestionably, the right interpretation, is to apply the coming here spoken of to his coming providentially to remove individuals by death, viewed in connexion with the happiness, or misery, immediately following, and with the day of judgment ultimately to follow; at which day the Lord Jesus Christ's second, literal, personal, and visible coming will take place. "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." The connexion between death and judgment, however remote in point of time, will yet be as close as possible, in point of result, for no change of state can take place after this life is at an end; death fixes the state for ever; as death leaves a man, so judgment will find him. This is the true meaning of the coming of the Son of man here spoken of. Give up this common and sound view, and adopt the idea of an intermediate literal coming of Christ between this moment and what Scripture calls his second coming at the last day, and especially make that intermediate coming near—and you adopt an opinion which is a perversion of a great part of Scripture, and which, whatever effect it may have on you, has, even in our own days, led on some to delusions and extravagancies, at which men of the world, with too much reason, laugh right merrily, and of which the pious, who are not intoxicated with breathing the enthusiastic atmosphere, cannot hear, or think, but with pity and sorrow. One thinks he is complying with the exhortation in this passage, when he watches the livelong night, and with the window of his apartment thrown wide open, gazes out in expectation of seeing "the sign of the Son of man" appear in the heavens. Another takes care to have always on the table, at evening parties, one cup more than the number of the guests, and when, at last, asked the reason, he replies, "We know not when our Lord may

come." These are facts;\* but facts how melancholy and instructive! Let us keep a tight rein on our imagination, lest it hurry us off, and bear us up into cloudy altitudes, till we become giddy, and be lost in the flight. Let us be devoted, affectionate, prayerful, and watchful; but let us be scripturally so. Nor let us suppose that we shall thus be deprived of the best motives to true watchfulness, or to any of the Christian duties: for, whatever temporary, feverish excitement may be produced by such baseless vagaries, while they have the charm of novelty, in the minds of those who abandon themselves to their sway, nothing, after all, either is, or can be conceived, half so grand and affecting, and nothing can ultimately prove so powerfully beneficial in its effects, as the common faith on this point, taken in connexion with the doctrines of the cross—the glorious and generally received truth respecting heaven and hell, death, the general resurrection, judgment and eternity.

In exhorting us to be ready for his coming in death and judgment, our Lord illustrates his meaning by telling us that we should be like faithful and diligent servants who are waiting at home to receive their "*master when he shall return from a wedding.*" The Jewish wedding procession generally took place at night with torch light; hence the propriety of the circumstance here mentioned. In order to be ready to receive their lord, it was obviously necessary that they should watch, that is, literally, that they should not fall asleep, but keep awake. Christ teaches, accordingly, that we should be "*found watching*;" of which, in the figurative sense, we shall speak by-and-by. Besides, our Lord says, "*Let your loins be girded about.*" The Greeks, Romans, Jews, and those of the Eastern nations in general, male as well as female, wore long, loose, flowing robes. Though ornamental, these robes were not very convenient for active exertion. That they might be more at liberty for such exertion, they were accustomed to gather up their upper garment, and to fasten it round their middle with a girdle or belt. Thus, we read† that "the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." We are told, also, that Elisha said to his servant Gehazi, "Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way; if thou meet any man salute him not, and if any man salute thee answer him not again." Hence, this figurative way of

\* A.D. 1831.

† 1 Kings xviii. 46; 2 Kings iv. 29.



speaking, to describe mental activity or readiness for action, and for whatever may happen. "Gird up the loins of your mind," says Peter,\* "be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Our Lord also directs us to have our "*lights burning*." If the servants in the house should allow the lamp to go out, in the circumstances supposed, they would be quite unprepared to receive their master, and he would find it very inconvenient, and be much displeased. But, if they were awake, and ready with their lights, and in expectation of his coming, then they would not be thrown into surprise and disorder; but would cheerfully open the door to him at the very first knock, or even go forth to meet him on his approach. Such servants would be blessed, or happy—approved and suitably rewarded by their master. And, in like manner, those who shall be found watching, and with the light of their good works shining, when Christ himself comes, shall be blessed, and treated with as much condescension, honour, and kindness, as if a great man, returning home, and finding his servants so properly prepared and engaged, should "*gird himself*," as a servant, "*and make them sit down to meat, and serve them*." This supposition, however, had something real in Roman custom for its foundation; for, the bridegrooms were themselves accustomed to serve at their own marriage feasts, and masters of families on certain other occasions.† Something like this was the kind condescension Jesus showed, when he rose from supper, laid aside his upper garments, took a towel and girded himself, poured water into a basin, and washed the disciples' feet. Our Lord here further says, that such servants would be blessed at whatever hour their master came, whether "*in the second watch, or in the third watch*." Originally, the Jews divided the night only into three watches; accordingly, we read of a first, second, and third watch, but nowhere of a fourth watch, in the Old Testament. Afterwards, however, adopting the custom from the Romans, they divided the night into four watches: we read, accordingly,‡ how, "in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto the disciples walking on the sea." The term "watch" was adopted, because, at the expiry of the

\* 1 Pet. i. 13.

† Veluti succinctus cursitat hospes.—*Hor. Sat.* vi. 107. In the *Saturnalia* of the Romans, the *Saccas* of the Babylonians, and the *Hermæa* of the Cretans, the servants sat at table, while their masters waited on them.

‡ Matt. xiv. 25.

time, whatever it was, the men who stood watch, the guards or sentinels, were changed. Counting the first watch from six o'clock in the evening, the second watch, as it is here called, would be from nine o'clock to midnight; and the third watch, from midnight to three o'clock. Whether their master should arrive in the one, or in the other, that is, whether he should arrive early or late, it would be well for the servants if they were ready to receive him.

Our Lord prosecutes the same subject, in the use of another comparison, in the 39th and 40th verses. In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul says, "Yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night"—a comparison which we must not overstrain, else we shall fall into absurdity and impiety. The simple meaning is, that it will come unexpectedly. Here Jesus intimates that, as when a house has been robbed, the house-keeper, if he had been aware when the robber was to come, would certainly have watched, to prevent his house from being broken open; so, the time of death and judgment being unknown, it behoves every wise man to see to it that he be always ready. "*Be ye, therefore, ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*" The day of final judgment is not known to man, and will come by surprise on the generation who shall then be living on earth; and so, the day of death is unknown to the individual now, and often comes very suddenly and unexpectedly; and, therefore, we should all be ever watchful and ever ready.

In the 41st verse, Peter is represented as inquiring whether Christ spoke this parable to them, that is, to the apostles only, or to the multitude who were listening, and to all. Our Lord does not give a direct answer to this inquiry; but we easily gather, from what he says, that he intended it for all, but especially for his own disciples. We formerly remarked that what he, on this occasion, addressed directly to his disciples, was spoken in the hearing, and, of course, for the instruction of the crowd. The last verse of the 13th chapter of Mark, is also decisive of this point, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

But, while applicable to all, this parable was more directly addressed to the apostles. Our Lord, in reply to Peter's question, expressed himself in a lively form of interrogation, which was calculated to make every one of the disciples reflect on his own conduct as a steward, or servant, to whom an important trust in Christ's spiritual house

was committed, and which ought to be still applied to himself by every one of us; for, we are all stewards, or trusted servants, in some sense. "*Who then is that faithful and wise steward*"—such a faithful and watchful servant, as was just before described—"whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat\* in due season?" Jesus then repeats the assertion of the happiness of such a servant when his lord shall find him thus employed, and describes the reward which will be bestowed on him, thus, "*Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*" That is, he will advance him to a higher place; for, whereas before he was only domestic steward, having charge of the servants of his family, and the internal affairs of his house, he will now give him charge of his whole estate, of all his affairs, both within and without.

But, as the reward of such an officer will be great, if he be faithful; so, his punishment will be great, if he be negligent. "*But if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming*"—if, in the foolish presumption that his lord's arrival will be far distant, if he ever come at all, he become insolent, oppressive, extravagant, and intemperate—if he "*shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink,*" in a riotous manner, "*and to be drunken;*" then, whatever he may have been foolishly imagining to the contrary, "*the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder,*" or, hew him in pieces as Samuel did Agag, "*and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers*"—with unfaithful servants. Here, however, our Lord's expressions become so strong, as plainly and irresistibly to lead on the mind from the literal meaning to the spiritual application, referring to the punishment of all the unbelieving and unfaithful at the coming of Christ in death and judgment. In the similar passage, Matt. xxiv. 51, the words are, "*And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" To the same effect are these alarming words in the Revelation: "*But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and*

\* Το σιτομετριον.—Μετα δι ταυτα σιτομετησας εις τριακονθ ημερας την δυναμιν εν του περικαταλιμφεντος σιτου. "After these things, having measured out an allowance of corn to the army for thirty days, out of the corn which remained," &c.—*Polybius*, iv. 63.

whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part," or portion, "in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Our Lord closes what he says on this subject, by teaching that not only gross offences, but neglect of duty, shall be punished, and that while every servant who shall be found unprepared and unfaithful, at his lord's coming, shall be severely punished, the punishment shall be increased according to the degree of guilt in each case. The servant "*who knew his master's will*," who was distinctly informed of it by express instruction, and yet did not keep himself prepared, nor do accordingly, "*shall be beaten with many stripes*,"\* shall have the heaviest punishment inflicted on him. "*But he that knew not*" his will by express information, and, in these circumstances, did commit offences which his own reason, and the light he had, should have enabled him to avoid, and which are, therefore, "*worthy of stripes, shall be beaten*" also, but with "*few stripes*:" For, it is a maxim, and a just maxim, among men, and also the rule with God, that "*unto whomsoever much is given*" in talents, light, opportunities, and advantages of any kind, "*of him shall be much required*." According to the Jewish law, Deut. xxv. 2, to which there is here, probably, an allusion, the number of stripes inflicted on criminals was limited and proportioned to their offences. "And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee."

Let us carefully mark and improve this view of the different degrees of guilt and consequent punishment. We here learn to be on our guard against sins of ignorance, and to apply for their forgiveness. An atonement was appointed for such, by the ceremonial law; and they still need to be forgiven through the blood of Christ. Though ignorance may, in some degree, extenuate guilt, surely none can plead ignorance as an excuse for offences in such a country as

\* *Δαρησεται πολλας πληγας* being understood. So in *Xenoph. de Exped.* lib. iv.: *Τουτον μιν ἀνικραγον παντες ὡς ὀλιγας παισιουσιν*. "They all cried out that the man had been beaten with few;"—that is, with too few stripes—that he had not been beaten sufficiently, or, so much as he deserved.

ours. Here, men ought to be instructed, and their very ignorance is a crime. Let them, then, beware lest they be destroyed for lack of knowledge. At the same time, we ought to remember that our accountableness increases with our means and our light. This is a very serious thought for those who are in high offices, as stewards, either civil or religious, and, indeed, for all who have been peculiarly well instructed in early life, and enjoy, in peculiar abundance and faithfulness, the means of grace. God grant that we may duly improve our advantages, and may never have to reflect with anguish on what are now our distinguishing privileges. Surely, if we are disobedient, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for the most wicked heathens, than for us. Those who are living in sin should also hence learn that the more they abandon themselves to their evil ways, the heavier their doom will become, and that they ought therefore to stop in their downward career; and yet, it would be poor consolation for them not to be consigned to a deeper hell, when every part of hell is intolerable. Let them bethink themselves thoroughly—let them turn completely round—let them begin to direct their faces towards Zion, and let them, in the strength of God, and by the faith of the gospel, not only escape from the heaviest doom, but escape from condemnation altogether, and lay hold on eternal life.

But let me now, without noticing further what may be considered as the incidental points in this passage, entreat you all to *attend to its leading exhortation relating to preparation and watchfulness for the coming of the Son of man—for death, judgment, and eternity.* “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.” Wait for your Lord. Let him find you watching, at whatever time he comes. Be ye also ready, for the Son of man cometh in an hour when ye think not. Blessed are you if he shall find you so doing. Such is the substance of the passage; and let it now be considered and improved by you.

Reflect on the immense *importance of the events* for which you are here called on to make preparation, and to be ready. You shall all have to retire from terrestrial objects, and to launch away into worlds unseen. This great event will usher you all into the immediate presence of your Maker and Judge. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” When the Lord comes, by his messenger of death, to smite

you, to cut the frail thread of your life, and to pass you into the state where there remain no more opportunities of salvation, what an all-important visit will that be! What an overpowering thought! away from the body, and that instant in the blissful presence of God, or in the company of condemned and despairing spirits! As sure as you are all here present, so sure shall you all, ere long, be numbered with those who have been, and join, either the glorified or the condemned. And, as it is appointed unto you all once to die, so, after death, comes the judgment. Then the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. Then those of you who are not ready, shall begin to call to the mountains and rocks, saying, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"—while, on the other hand, to those of you who are prepared for it, that day will be a day of rejoicing. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then they who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall they ever be with the Lord." And who among you all will say that such events are not worth preparing for, or that no preparation is necessary? Acknowledge, then, the kindness which prompted the exhortation, "Be ye also ready."

Think, too, what force is given to this exhortation by the circumstance of your complete *uncertainty as to the time* of the Lord's coming. As to his literal and personal coming at the last day, we are told that "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, nor the Son," so as that it is to be made known by him, "but the Father only." And, as to that event which will be equally decisive of your fate, death, you are equally ignorant when it shall happen. Though it should not happen for years, it cannot be far off from any of you; it may happen to-morrow, it may happen this moment. How urgent, then, is the necessity for your immediate preparation!

But consider, here, *what is implied in being ready* for the coming of the Lord. It implies, as it is often expressed, both habitual and actual preparation. It implies *habitual* preparation; that is, that your state and general character be such as that you would be safe, at whatever time you

were called away. Now, this preparation just consists in what we have so often occasion to speak of; and that is, in being in a state of pardon and regeneration. How awful to think of an immortal creature hurried, with all his sins unpardoned, into the presence of an offended Judge! What but amazing infatuation can allow any one of you to feel at ease who is in such a condition? But, serene may you be, even in the prospect of dissolution, who are persuaded, on good grounds, that the Judge is your friend: and soundly may you sleep, who know that, if you were to awake in the eternal world, your iniquities, though they were sought for, would not be found. If you wish to be ready, you must obtain restoration to the divine favour. And in this pursuit, see that you mistake not the way. Remember that the gospel is a method for saving sinners; and that it is as sinners, as guilty and helpless, that you are to apply. You must renounce all trust in yourselves, and depend, by faith, solely on the merits of Christ. If, when the time comes, you presume to go to meet the Lord on any other ground, you will find yourselves miserably mistaken. The offended party has a right to dictate the way in which you are to approach him: and if you proudly and wilfully imagine that you have found a better way, he will not receive you. Happy such of you as shall then be "found in Christ, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith!" Remember, too, that habitual preparation implies that the habits of grace be inwrought into the soul by regeneration. That this is absolutely necessary is manifest from this consideration alone, that though the Lord, contrary to all his perfections, and all his declarations, were to consent to meet you without it, you could not enjoy his presence without it. Without renewed hearts and holy dispositions you could not be happy, you would be out of your element—you would be miserable in heaven. Think of this, and if you have reason to fear that you are in nature's depravity, desire that the Lord would create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you. Or, if you have obtained some measure of conformity to his image, and are, on the whole, observant of his laws, strive after a more complete resemblance and devotedness, so shall you assuredly see his face in mercy.

But there should also be what has been called *actual* preparation for the coming of Christ. A person might be

in such a state of habitual preparation as not to be lost, though taken unawares; and yet he might be so far off his guard, as to be much distressed, and to be, in some degree, a loser by his negligence. What precise degree of forgetfulness may be at all consistent with a state of acceptance, it is impossible to determine, and it would be as dangerous, as it is unnecessary, to inquire. No right-thinking person, no true Christian, can ever make it a study to know how far he may safely slumber; on the contrary, every believer will be anxious, not only to maintain his ground, but to gain more. What we are now saying can only apply to believers; for, it would be absurd to exhort those to have graces in exercise, who have no graces to exercise. But, even pious persons are liable to be off their guard, and require to be admonished. To be taken at an unfavourable time, at a time of partial backsliding, will expose them to much perplexity in encountering the king of terrors, and will prevent the higher degree of happiness to which they would otherwise attain. "If any man's work abide," and it will stand, if it be built on the true foundation, "he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."—"While the bridegroom tarried," all the ten virgins, the wise as well as the foolish, "slumbered and slept:" the wise had oil in their lamps, it is true, they had grace, and therefore, they were not utterly confounded and rejected; but it would have been better, if they had had their grace in exercise, if they had been awake, and if they had had their loins girt and their lights burning, that they might have opened to him, and met him, immediately.

Let the particular duty of watchfulness, then, engage your most careful attention. How vigilant is he who is appointed to keep watch at sea! "The watchful mariner," says one, "is ever on the look out. His eyes and ears are both open. Be the prevailing fear an enemy's force, or a sunk rock, or concealed bank, or shelving coast, he discerns the smallest symptoms, observes the motion of the waves, sounds with the line, and gives the alarm on the most minute alteration. Without such watchfulness, the most precious merchandise, and the lives of men, would be each hour in jeopardy. Much the same is the case in warfare by land. The sentinel on the outpost is heedful of the most inconsiderable object within his station: and in the darkness of the night, his ear listens to every noise. Nothing can divert his attention from



fidelity to his charge. Such also is the case with the watchman in the besieged city. From the walls, as far as he has light, he marks each change and alteration in the posture of the enemy, draws a judgment from the nicest circumstances; and, in the night, discerns even the rustling of the leaf moved by the breath of heaven; and at every suspicious noise he gives the alarm to the guards of the city. Without this, the cry of havoc would oft be heard in the town, when drowned in heaviness and slumber." Thus it is that you should watch for your own souls. Be watchful lest you make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Be watchful against your spiritual enemies. "Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Watch over your words and actions, and your very thoughts. "Keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life." Beware of those things which are contrary to watchfulness, such as sloth, inconsideration, worldliness, and sensuality. And see that you join prayer to watchfulness. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."—"Watch unto prayer."—"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Are you careful to barricade your houses, and to guard against thieves? then, every time you lock your doors, or take any precautions to secure your dwellings, let the act remind you to be at least as careful of your souls as you are of your houses.

Think, all of you, whatever your present state may be, think of the uncertainty of your lives, and of the folly and danger of procrastinating attention to the great concern of salvation and preparation for eternity. It is likely that some of you, who have made no preparation at all, think and speak of beginning to prepare by-and-by: but, suffer me to deal plainly with you, in a case too important to admit of flattery, and too dangerous to admit of concealment. It is but too probable that you who can coolly delay, in this manner, will be lost for ever. And why? Not because there is any want of room in the mercy of God, or the merits of Christ—not because there is any want of threatenings to alarm, or promises to allure you—not because your case is in itself desperate—not because your sins are too great to be forgiven—not because you will, in this life, earnestly seek the Lord, and be rejected; but because it is too probable that you will never heartily set about preparation at all—that you will continue careless, unbelieving, and

impenitent—that, in a word, you will continue just as you are. That this is too probable will appear to yourselves, if you duly consider your already misspent years, the shortness and uncertainty of your remaining time, and the many providential warnings and gospel invitations you have disregarded. What better opportunities can you expect hereafter, than you have enjoyed already? Suppose they were to continue with you as they are, and you with them, which you do not know, you would be hardening more and more by such habits of resistance: so that, if you are wilfully putting away from you the warning of the present moment, it is far more probable, humanly speaking, that you will be overtaken by death in your state of guilt and depravity, than it is that you will ever turn and live, and become ready for eternity. “It is really exceedingly probable, and therefore you have every reason to fear: but, thanks be to God, it is not certain, and therefore you have no reason to despair.” Therefore now, O sinners, if this unreserved declaration offend you, or, at least, seem harsh, do, I beseech you, prove that it is a mistake, by rousing yourselves from your death-like slumbers. Let none of you say, “Soul, take thine ease for many days;” for, hark! a messenger knocks at thy door; it is the messenger of death, and his message is, “Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee.” If you are not ready before, how can you prepare then? When reason is disturbed, and care perplexes, and the head is sick, and the heart faint, and troubles rush in from every quarter, how can you prepare then? “The ship must be repaired before she goes to sea;” for, it is too late to think of repairs, when the wind roars, and the waves roll mountains high, and there is no probability of her weathering the storm. The soul must bethink herself while she is capable of thinking; she must attend to the things which belong to her peace, before they be for ever hid from her eyes. Prepare, then, and prepare without any farther delay, to meet your God.

As for you who are so far prepared already, as to be at least safe, let it not happen to you to be surprised in the entanglements of sin and of the world. “Take heed to yourselves, lest, at any time, your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.”—“Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”—“But ye,

brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. For God hath not appointed you unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." Be ye, therefore, in all respects ready: "Set your houses in order." Let even your temporal affairs be so arranged, on Christian principles, that nothing of that sort, at least, may distract you in your last moments. In a word, let it be your study to live in your duty, and to die at your post. In this way you will be sure to be ready; and the views of your Lord's coming, instead of being terrific, will be refreshing to you. The delay may appear to you long; but to him it will be only as a watch in the night. Be not weary, then, in waiting for his coming, for it will prove well worth waiting for. Watch, and listen; yet a little while, and he who is to come, will come, and will not tarry. Hearken, and you shall at last hear the long expected knock, and, hearing it, shall open to him, and welcome him with an "Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus."

## LECTURE LXIX.

LUKE XII. 49-53.

“ I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? 50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! 51. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

“ *I am come to send fire on the earth.*”—Every thing that is of God has a direct tendency to promote his own glory, and the happiness of his creatures, on the whole. This, however, does not prevent fallen men from abusing his favours; nor is it inconsistent with his turning, as it were, some of his laws out of their original course, because of human wickedness. Tendency is one thing; effect is another. And, though it is true that the divinely constituted principles in the natural and moral world, which tend to happiness and holiness, do still produce these effects in many instances; yet, in other instances, from no fault in the principles themselves, they fail of good, and even become the occasion of evil. Do we not see many illustrations of this in nature, and in common life? Fire, for example, is of vast importance in most of the operations of man; it is, in many circumstances, essential to the preservation of life, and it is, on the whole, greatly conducive to happiness: but, when it obtains the mastery, and increases into a conflagration, it becomes destructive of life and property. Water is necessary to man’s refreshment, cleansing, and very life; in rivers, it is ornament and power; and in oceans, though apparently an obstruction, it is the greatest help to intercourse between distant regions of the earth, so that none can doubt of its being a blessing on the whole: but some individuals lose their lives by being drowned in our rivers; in floods, it ravages the country; and at sea, ships with their whole crews, are lost

in its storms. The air is the breath of our life, it fans us with its breeze, and wafts our vessels with its gale; but it is sometimes pestilential, and it sometimes becomes the destructive whirlwind. Food and drink are for strength and refreshment, and who could want them in some form? but they are often abused to gluttony and drunkenness. Raiment is needful for warmth, and comely for ornament; but it is sometimes the occasion of pride. The best informed men have not erred in considering civil liberty as most desirable, and most advantageous; but most severe have been the struggles to gain and to preserve it, and it has not unfrequently degenerated into licentiousness. Now, it is much the same with regard to the tendencies and results of the gospel. Its tendencies are good, all good, and only good; its results are mixed, though the good greatly preponderates. All that is good in the results is truly its own—is the direct and natural effect corresponding to its own benevolent and holy tendency. All that is evil in the results, happens notwithstanding its tendencies, and in consequence of its being brought into contact with the perverse and wicked dispositions of men, which it seeks to reform, and is no farther connected with it than as it is made the innocent occasion of it. As well might the ruffian, who murders and robs a man on the highway, impute the wickedness and the misery to his victim, as any impute the evils in question to Christianity. It is true that, if Christianity had not existed, some of the attendant evils could not have existed; and just so, if the poor man had not been on the highway, the ruffian could not have murdered and robbed him; but, as common sense forbids the transference of the odium in the one case, so does it forbid it in the other. Certain incidental evils, which the gospel will ultimately overcome, might have been avoided for a time, had such a system not been introduced into the world; but its introduction has prevented far greater evils, and brought in its train numerous and unparalleled blessings, which otherwise would have been unknown. The purpose for which Christ came, was a gracious purpose; he came to save sinners, he came to seek and to save that which was lost: yet some, by rejecting him, aggravate their guilt and condemnation, and turn the first of blessings into the greatest of curses. But let none to such crimes add the blasphemy of imputing them to the God of salvation; for, he will hurl back the charge on their guilty heads, and be clear when he judges them.

This declaration, "I am come to send fire on the earth," may be considered as having some reference to the effect which the discriminating and searching truths of the gospel, the contests which would arise, providential afflictions, and persecutions, in connexion with the influences of his Spirit, would have, in trying and purifying Christ's own people. What Malachi\* foretold of him as the Messenger of the covenant, is to be applied, not only to the particular age in which he tabernacled on earth, but to his dealings with his people in every age: "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." The force and beauty of this comparison may not be at once perceived. I never understood this figure, said one, till I saw a refiner of silver at his employment. It was a work which required much time and attention, and therefore he sat at it; he often looked into the crucible; he carefully removed the dross, from time to time, as it rose to the surface; he kept the fire steady and strong; he prolonged the operation, till the purification was complete, and no longer, for, that would have needlessly wasted the substance of the silver; he had no fixed time for stopping, but his rule was to stop when he could see his own face distinctly reflected in the surface of the metal. Thus it is that trials, of whatever nature, and however heavy and long they may be, serve to purify believers from the pollution of sin. Let them not murmur at the process; let them not desire that it should cease till it has been effectual, and that is, till the Redeemer can see his own image reflected from their souls; and let them rest assured that the fire will not be either hotter at the time, or longer in its continuance, than what is necessary for the gracious purpose. "Glorify ye the Lord, then, in the fires."—"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rather rejoice."—"The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

\* Mal. iii. 2.

Our Lord may be here considered as intimating, also, that the same fiery trial which would purify his people, would consume his obstinate enemies. The same prophet, Malachi, who speaks of Messiah as a refiner and purifier, also says, "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." John the Baptist, also, thus describes the day of Messiah's decision: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire."

There can be no doubt, however, that the chief thing our Lord intended by his being come to send fire on the earth, was, that the introduction of the gospel would, in consequence of men's depravity and perversity, occasion differences, oppositions, persecutions, and contests, which would be like the kindling of a destructive fire. Our Lord then adds, "What will I, if it be already kindled?" or, "What would I, but that it were kindled?"\* The fire in question was, indeed, already kindled, when Christ was speaking, though it was not burning so fiercely as it did afterwards. Bitter opposition to himself and his cause had repeatedly been made, and designs were forming to cut him off. The scribes and Pharisees were accustomed to urge him vehemently, and to lay wait for him, seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him; and the contest between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan was soon to become much more terrible. But, what did Jesus wish? Did he wish that no such manifestations had shown themselves? By no means; for, though to be regretted as in themselves, they were proofs that the truth was beginning to make some impression. And what did he wish, as to the future? Did he wish that the excitement should die away? By no means; he desired that it should increase, and extend, in the more full and more general publication of the gospel. And how did people imagine that he would afterwards conduct himself? Would he desist from preach-

\* Dr Campbell.—*Και τι σιλω εἰ ἡδη ἀνηφθῆ*; id est, nihil jam restat amplius.—*Raphelius and Camerarius*. Utinam jam jam accendatur.—*Grotius*. *Εἰ* seems to be here a particle of wishing, as in Luke xix. 42, *Εἰ ἔγνων*,—if thou hadst known; that is, O that thou hadst known! Lightfoot says that "What will I," is the same with "This I will," and that the meaning is, "This I will that it be already kindled."

ing the gospel of the kingdom? By no means; "I must work the works of him that sent me," said he. Or, would he qualify the terms in which he and his apostles had denounced the errors and corruptions of men? By no means. The truth must be told, whatever offence it might give to unbelievers: the greatest of blessings must be diffused, of whatever enormities ungodly men might, on that account, be most unreasonably guilty. On a false view of persecution, and of the contests which have been, in some sense, connected with Christianity, some infidels, as we have already hinted, have presumed to found the blasphemous assertion, that it would have been better for the world that Christianity had never been known. We repeat, that much evil has been done under pretence of supporting Christianity, and also in opposing it, but that in neither the one case nor the other is Christianity itself to blame, seeing all evil is directly opposed to its genius, design, and tendency. Besides, it is very evident that Christianity, on the whole, and in the widest sense, taking in both what has been unfairly imputed to it, and what it has really done, has greatly ameliorated the condition of the world. The evils which have been incidentally connected with it, are no more a proof that it is an evil itself, or that evil has resulted from it on the whole, than the oppressive acts of tyrants, and the various iniquities and cruelties perpetrated under the name of governments, are a proof that a just government is no blessing, and that the world would be better without civil government altogether. Such is the conclusion to which we must come, in reference even to the present world: but, with how much greater strength does this conclusion force itself on our minds, when eternity is taken into view! The everlasting happiness of a single immortal soul, must far more than counterbalance all the temporal evil that ever existed.

As a more full expression of his desire to see the progress of gospel events, even at the expense of much suffering in others, and also as a proof that he was far from contemplating with satisfaction the happy results of scenes of suffering which he would not partake of himself, our Saviour says in the 50th verse, "*But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*" It was not of any baptism with water he here spoke; nor was it of the baptism of the Spirit; but it was of what is called a baptism of sufferings. The meaning of this verse is cleared



up by that passage in Matt. xx. 22. Jesus said to James and John, when their mother applied to him for places of peculiar dignity for them, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." Now he had just before said that he was to be condemned to death, and to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified: and he adds, soon after, that he was to give his life a ransom for many. The cup, therefore, must have been the same of which he spoke a short time before his death: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" James was the first of the apostles who suffered martyrdom; and, though John is generally believed to have died a natural death, he underwent banishment and various persecutions: so that James and John both partook of the cup of suffering, though not as an atonement for sin. Our Lord's sufferings unto death seem to be called a baptism, as, in them, he was, as it were, bathed with blood instead of water, and thus consecrated and prepared to enter on his kingly office. "How am I *straitened*," said he, "till it be accomplished!" When there is any great work, whether of exertion or of suffering, before a man, he feels very anxious, and he is pressed in spirit with a great desire to have it over. This expression teaches us that our Lord's sufferings were very dreadful—that he was quite aware of them—that they were voluntary, and that he underwent them cheerfully. He was filled with a holy zeal thus to accomplish the gracious purpose for which he came into the world. "Sacrifice and offering, which are offered by the law, thou didst not require," said he, "but a body hast thou prepared for me. Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God."—"I lay down my life for the sheep:"—"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."—"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer." When the hour of his being bathed in blood drew nigh, instead of shrinking back, he led the way before his disciples, ascending up to Jerusalem, so that they were amazed. And when he had drunk the cup of wrath to the dregs, and accomplished our redemption, he exclaimed, "It is finished." Let

us learn, from this declaration, to admire our Lord's readiness and anxiety to suffer for us—to place all our hope on his baptism of blood—and, after his example, cheerfully to submit to every affliction.

After this reference to himself, Jesus returns to what he had stated just before: "*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division.*" According to Matt. x. 34, Christ said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword." The gospel is certainly calculated to make peace between God and man, and between man and man. Its genius was thus described, by a multitude of the heavenly host, at the Redeemer's birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." The Saviour is called "The Prince of peace;" and it is said, that "in his days there shall be abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth." In so far as the gospel is really received so as to influence man according to his own nature, in so far has it already been productive of peace; and when it shall altogether direct the measures of the nations, peace shall be universal: "Men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." But, while this is its only direct tendency and effect, indirectly, as we have already noticed, it has been made the innocent occasion of much division and trouble. Its rejection by the Jews brought down, on that infatuated people, destruction by the Roman sword, as, no doubt, it often brings calamities on other nations: all these things, however, are to be imputed to the obstinacy and sinful passions of men. But more generally, our Lord here appears to be speaking of all the different kinds of opposition and contention, to which the gospel, in any sense, gives rise. So contrary are its heavenly principles to the errors of false religions, to the pride of philosophy falsely so called, to the maxims of the world, and to the corruptions of the unrenewed heart, that whenever it is brought into contact with them, a contest arises, and their united power is arrayed against it. Disputes, reproaches, and calumnies may be called the mild forms in which this enmity to the truth appears; and, when it can excite the secular arm, the power of civil rulers, it breaks out in the more violent forms of persecution, such as fines, imprisonment, scourging, tortures, murders, wars, and massacres. But, so far are even

the most crying of these evils from being any proof that the gospel is not of God, that they are one of the clear testimonies of its truth, inasmuch as they prove it to be diametrically opposed to the spirit of the world that lieth in wickedness, and were distinctly foretold by Christ himself. "If ye were of the world," said he, "the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."—"Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."—"They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." These predictions were awfully fulfilled in the heathen and Popish persecutions; but, do we not see a clear demonstration of the same spirit of opposition, in those less appalling divisions which occurred in a way more applicable to our own every day experience? Divisions, differences of opinion with regard to Christ and his doctrine, very early appeared. "There was much murmuring among the people concerning him; for, some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people."—"So there was a division among the people because of him."\* And when Paul and Barnabas were preaching at Antioch† in Pisidia, the stir and divisions which arose were great. "When the Jews saw the multitudes," who crowded to hear the word, "they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." When the Gentiles then heard the proclamation of the gospel, "they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."—"But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city" (observe, in passing, how not only the profligate and the low, but those who are devout, in a certain way, and lay claim to the character of being religious, and those of higher stations, from whom better things might be expected, are too often opposed to the truth as it is in Jesus), "the Jews, stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men," the rulers, "of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts." In like

\* John vii. 12, 43.

† Acts xiii. 45, 48.

manner, when the same two preachers were in Iconium,\* “a great multitude, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.”—“But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.”

And so it is still universally, where the gospel makes any impression, however much circumstances may vary and limit the outward manifestations of these divisions and differences of opinion. Nor let it be thought that such stirrings are to be deprecated. There is evil, no doubt, in them, in so far as they are in opposition to the truth, and in so far as even the defence of the truth is conducted in an improper spirit; but still, there is hardly any state of things worse than a state of complete stillness and indifference. “When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:” where there is no concern about divine things, no good can be doing; where there is indifference to religion altogether, there can certainly be no theological disputes. It is something to get men made alive to the subject of religion, and it is chiefly by means of such discussion that error is dissipated, and the truth made to triumph. The wrath of men, however, worketh not the righteousness of God; and, therefore, though God may bring good out of evil, and cause the words to be fulfilled, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain;” all violence ought to be studiously avoided by those who desire to promote the truth; and the excesses into which its enemies have fallen, cannot be contemplated but with horror.

In farther describing the divisions which the publication of the gospel would occasion, our Lord declares that they should arise between persons dwelling in the same house, and even between persons related to each other by the nearest and dearest ties. “*For, from henceforth, there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father: the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother: the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.*” We have a similar passage in the 10th chapter of Matthew. There Christ also says, “And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father

\* Acts xiv.

the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death." In all this there is an obvious reference to the passage in Micah vii. 5, 6: "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: a man's enemies are the men of his own house." The enmity between the woman and her seed, and the serpent and his seed, has been working all the way down from the fall. There is, in all unrenewed persons, a natural dislike to real religion, and spiritual excellence. Believers cannot speak or act as if neglecters of salvation were in a safe state; on the contrary, they must and do desire their change: but this their very charity, their love to their souls, is construed into intolerable bigotry and uncharitableness; and their very piety and superiority to the world, conveying a reflection on the worldly, become, to such persons, the cause of uneasiness and disgust. Hence the dislike in question; and so powerful, inveterate, and deep-rooted is this dislike that the ties of friendship and blood cannot restrain it; it bursts asunder all the bonds of common humanity, and of natural affection. As soon as a family of human beings existed numerous enough to render a difference possible, there were found in it a believing Abel, and a wicked Cain: and we know the atrocious crime which Cain perpetrated because his own works were evil, and his brother's good. Ishmael's mocking Isaac led Paul to write what still holds true, "As then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." Of twin brothers, the Lord said, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." Eli was a man of God; but his sons were sons of Belial: whereas, Josiah was the eminently pious son of Amon, an uncommonly wicked man. David experienced much of the hatred of his friends. "Behold," said he, "my son who came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse." In his own person, and as a type of Christ, he said, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, hath lifted up his heel against me." Job was heard to say, "My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. All my inward friends abhorred me; and they whom I loved are turned against me."

But, how awfully were the words before us fulfilled in

many cases of persecution which afterwards befell the Christians, and to which, indeed, the words especially refer. The nearest relations, not even excepting brothers and sisters, parents and children, in many instances, betrayed each other to the heathen persecutors, and rejoiced and exulted over their Christian friends in their sufferings, because of what they accounted a mad superstition; or, they endeavoured, by rough treatment, or, what was still more trying, by the most urgent and affectionate entreaties, to prevail on them to deny Christ. Let one example suffice. In the persecution raised by the Roman emperor, Severus, in the year of our Lord 200, Vivia Perpetua was seized at Carthage, along with four young catechumens, and to these five a man named Satur voluntarily joined himself. Perpetua was a lady of quality; she had a father, a mother, and two brothers, one of whom was a catechumen: she was about twenty-two years of age, was married, and had an infant at her breast. While these confessors were in the hands of the persecutors, the father of Perpetua, himself a pagan, but full of affection for his favourite child, importuned her to fall from her faith. His entreaties were vain. Her pious constancy appeared to him an absurd obstinacy, and enraged him so much as to induce him to give her very rough treatment. When she was cast into prison, her concern for her infant was extreme; and for some time, her mind was oppressed with the misery she was bringing on her family: but, as it was for a good conscience, she, in the exercise of prayer, obtained composure, and her prison, which at first was peculiarly formidable and distressing to her, as she had hitherto experienced nothing but the delicacies of genteel life—her prison became to her like a palace. Her father, some time after, came to the prison, overwhelmed with sorrow, which, in all probability, was augmented by his reflecting on his own rough and angry behaviour to her at their last interview. But he attempted to subdue her fortitude by a different mode of attack. “Have pity, my daughter,” said he, “on my grey hairs, have pity on your father, if I was ever worthy of that name: if I myself have brought you up to this age, if I have preferred you to your brethren, make me not a reproach to mankind;—have compassion on your son, too, who cannot survive you: lay aside your obstinacy, lest you destroy us all; for, if you perish, we must all of us shut our mouths in disgrace.” The old man with much tenderness, then kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, weeping

and calling her no longer his daughter, but the mistress of his fate. Though inwardly torn with filial affection, she could offer him no other comfort than to desire him to acquiesce in the divine disposal. Three days before the spectacles at which she and the other Christians were to be put to death, she bore another child. On the day before the shows, Satur said, with much animation, to the crowd of people who went from curiosity to see them, "Observe well our faces, that ye may know them at the day of judgment." On the fatal day, the martyrs advanced with firmness, and Perpetua sang, as already victorious. They were first scourged, and then exposed to wild beasts; and then the people insisted on having the martyrs brought forward into the midst of the amphitheatre, that they might have the pleasure of seeing them die. Some of them rose up and went forward of their own accord: others received the last blow without speaking or stirring. Perpetua was despatched by a gladiator, and thus, with the rest, slept in Jesus.\*

But, not to dwell on so extreme cases—does it not still happen that the greatest difficulties in the way of those who wish to come out from the world, and to be faithful to the Saviour, arise, not from strangers and avowed enemies, but from those of their own house—from their own nearest connexions? Are there not still divisions in many families, some being feelingly alive, and others dead to the importance of eternal things? Let me conclude, then, with pressing those considerations on the consciences of all of you who live together in households.

As members of families, does not this announcement of our Lord's address you in language at once awakening and tender? Are any of you now ready to say, "You speak of divisions being occasioned in families by the gospel—of some relations opposing others because of their piety—of five in one house being divided, three against two, and two against three; but it is not so in our family, there are no such divisions among us, none of us trouble the rest, we are all of one mind?"—To such we would say, Consider well whence this uniformity arises. Is it the result of your being all one in Christ Jesus, or of your being all one in sin? Is it the peace of believing? or, is it the peace of indifference? Is it the sameness of enlightened, or is it the indiscrimination of blinded minds? Is it the communion of saints? or, is it the conspiracy of sinners? Is it the tranquillity of sancti-

\* Milner.

fied life and heavenly hope? or, is it the stillness of insensibility, of desolation, and of death? Is it that you are all converted, or all unconverted? Consider well; and if you have reason to conclude unfavourably, then your forbearance with each other, and your peace with the world, are no just causes of congratulation, for there is every reason to believe that you would have been equally unmolested from without, and equally well pleased with each other within, had you lived when open persecution for the name of Christ was raging in its utmost fury. But think how sad a thing it is, for a whole family with the name of Christians, to be, as to all spiritual and saving blessings, no better than heathens! Remember that the Lord threatens to "pour out his fury," as "upon the heathen," so also "upon the families that call not upon his name." Let the single circumstance, that none of you have ever suspected that you are wrong, convince you that you are all wrong together; and now at last, begin to "ask the way to Zion with your faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten."

With regard to those cases in which a part of the family are brought under the influence of the gospel, there will be in them, without doubt, in some degree, the division in question. But let the more indifferent members beware of being guilty of anything that may be justly considered as partaking of the nature of persecution. Instead of being offended with them, and opposing, or discouraging them, let them be thankful that any of their family have been brought to God—let them know that the ark, which still, as in the days of Obed-edom, brings a blessing with it, is in their house; and whether they be superiors or inferiors, let them be so humble and so wise, as to follow where any of their dear friends have been enabled thus nobly to lead the way. It is best known to yourselves whether any of you have, in word or deed, behaved unkindly to any of your family, and have been as thorns in their sides, because of their surpassing yourselves in piety; that is best known to yourselves; but if any of you are conscious of any thing of this kind, I beseech you no longer to oppose the work of God, and give uneasiness to those whose fondest wish is your everlasting happiness. Let just compunction now touch you. Let the full play of your affections go forth towards those who are so well deserving of your love, and seek to follow them, in so far as they are following Christ.



If, as is probable, some of you who love the Lord, and desire to follow him fully, are connected with those who jeer you on that account, or, at least, endeavour to keep you back, you will require a degree of prudence, good temper, and faithfulness, which you can only expect to get from the Lord by prayer. Let none persuade you that faithfulness to Christ can be undutifulness to your relations, or inconsistent with the affection which is due to them; for, what better proof can you give of your regard to them, than continuing to conduct yourselves in that exemplary way, in which alone you can ever be of any service, under God, in bringing them to attend to the things which belong to their peace? At all events, and whatever they may do, it is necessary for you to be faithful. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." If you love father or mother, son or daughter, husband or wife, brother or sister, more than Christ, so as to keep you back from following him, you are not worthy of him. Be faithful, and do not despair of winning over those of your friends who are yet holding out against him. "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

Finally, How happy the family of which all the members are living together in love and peace, and in the obedience of the truth, and encouraging each other in the way to heaven, and whose separate and joint prayers and praises ascend to the throne of grace! "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together, in" godly "unity!" It is like "the precious ointment," which, poured on the head of Aaron, descended to the skirts of his garment. It is "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore." Amen.

## LECTURE LXX.

LUKE XII. 54-59.

“And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. 55. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. 56. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? 57. Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? ¶58. When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. 59. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.”

In what is stated in these verses, our Lord is still continuing his discourse at the door of the Pharisee's house, where he had dined; and he is addressing himself to the great multitude who were there gathered together. He had just before been speaking of the many divisions to which the gospel of peace would give occasion, because of the depravity, perversity, and obstinacy of fallen men: and he stated that that fire of contention was already kindling. In this connexion, he, in the first four of the verses now read, gives a particular instance of that perversity, namely, that many who were so acute in judging of natural appearances should be so very dull in their comprehension of spiritual matters, and in perceiving the proofs of his Messiahship.

“*And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.*” All pretensions to foretell the future history of nations, or individuals, from the stars, or to foretell the weather, or any thing else, by supernatural wisdom, are not only absurd but impious, and severely condemned in the Word of God, and therefore, ought neither to be put forth, nor encouraged, by Christians. Thus saith the Lord to Babylon, “Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries,

wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth: if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble: the fire shall burn them, they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame." This does not, however, hinder men from forming some opinion, at times, of the weather that may be expected from appearances which are more or less obvious. It is true that man does not know, or fully understand, "the balancings of the clouds." But in cases in which second causes are seen to have already begun to work, we may often be able to form a correct opinion of what is to follow, especially when past experience of the result in similar circumstances justifies the expectation; and this is not presumption, but the exercise of judgment and common sense. In a country situated like ours, the weather is proverbially unsteady, and, therefore, to us, very uncertain. In some parts of the world, however, it is less so; nay, particular kinds of weather may there be calculated on as almost certainly to occur after certain appearances, and at certain seasons of the year. It is obvious, too, that the indications of the weather by clouds and the direction of the wind, require to be differently interpreted according as the places where the observers reside are situated in respect of seas, continents, and mountains, and therefore, that modes of judging, which are correct in one place, may be erroneous in another. The way of judging of the weather, for example, from the direction of the wind, in our own island, is, generally speaking, just the opposite on the eastern coast, from what it is on the western. "Cold cometh out of the north," says Elihu, and so say we, being on this side of the line; but on the other side, cold cometh out of the south.

With regard to the signs of the weather here mentioned, their general correctness is obvious. The Mediterranean Sea lay to the west of the land of Judea, and, of course, clouds rising in that direction, and carried from it by the wind, would generally bring "a shower," or rather, heavy rain, as the word might be rendered. This finds an illustration in the following passage in the First Book of Kings xviii. 41. Elijah, the prophet, said to Ahab, the king, in a time of dreadful drought and famine, "Get thee up, eat, and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went

up to eat and to drink: and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees," that is, assumed a posture of humble and earnest prayer, "and said to his servant, Go up now, look towards the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again, seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the meantime, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." The prophet probably knew, by inspiration before, that rain would be sent, and we are told that he asked for it in the way of believing and persevering prayer; but the cloud rising out of the Mediterranean Sea, of which there is a fine prospect from the top of Mount Carmel, was the visible token of its approach. The other indication of the weather, to which Christ refers, is the blowing of the south wind. This wind brought heat, not merely because it was from the warmer quarter of the heavens, but also and still more because, in coming to Judea, it had to blow over the hot deserts of Arabia, which lay to the south and east of Judea.\* It is well known that the winds which blow off the deserts of Asia and Africa are oppressively hot. In that very similar passage in the 16th chapter of Matthew, our Lord referred to signs somewhat different, which, no doubt, also generally held good, "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red: and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering."†

These signs of the weather the unbelieving Jews were sagacious enough to mark, and, no doubt, also accustomed to act upon; and this led our Lord, when he reflected on their obtuseness in reference to religion, to say, as in the 56th verse, "*Ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?*" There could be no hypocrisy in observing the visible signs of the weather; but their hypocrisy consisted

\* Job xxxvii. 17: "Thy garments are warm when he quieteth the earth by the south wind."

† *Cœruleus pluviam denunciat, igneus Euros:  
Sin maculæ incipient rutilo immiscerier igni,  
Omnia tunc pariter vento nimisque videbis  
Fervere.*

*Virg. Georg. i. 453.*

in this, that while they were sagacious in that, and in other earthly things, they asked more signs from Christ, under pretence of being influenced by a sincere desire to come to the knowledge of the truth.\* In the passage partly quoted from Matthew, it is expressly said that Jesus referred to their sagacity in discerning the face of the sky, in consequence of their tempting him, by desiring him to show them a sign from heaven. Hence, in what he said as stated here by Luke, we are led to conclude that there was a reference to the same unreasonable spirit. "How is it," considering all this sagacity in other respects, "that ye do not discern this time?" or, as in Matthew, "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" That is, Why do ye not understand the signs which, at this very time, clearly prove me to be the Messiah? and why are ye not therefore led to acknowledge me as such?

And how numerous, and how clear, were these signs! Let us note the chief of them. There was, in general, the fulfilment of Old Testament predictions; for, the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy. More particularly, there were the signs of his birth, in his being born of a virgin, in the city of Bethlehem, of the tribe of Judah, and family of David;—there were the signs of the Holy Ghost descending on him, and the voice from heaven testifying to him at his baptism;—there were all the miracles which he and his apostles were performing;—Daniel's seventy weeks were expiring—the sceptre was departing from Judah—there was a general expectation of Messiah's appearance—and yet the result was a general rejection of him. These signs were already actually seen, and he had fixed on others which were exhibited soon after, namely, his own sufferings, death, and resurrection. To this last he especially pointed, when he said that there should no sign be given to that wicked generation, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. It was altogether inconceivable that an impostor should lay the foundation of his system on his own sufferings, death, resurrection, and subsequent doings. But, with the signs his hearers already had

\* Raphaelius and Schmidius are of opinion that the word ὑποκριται should be here rendered, not hypocrites, but diviners or foretellers:—"Harioli, communis enim, quæ huic voci subjicitur notio, nihil ad hunc locum. Ἰσοκρίτης est occultus iudex, occultarum et abstrusarum rerum iudex, conjector, ut, ὑποκριται ὄντων, conjectores somniorum." There is an example of this use of the word in Lucian in Somnio sub finem. The verb ὑποκρισθαι is used by Homer, and often by Herodotus, to signify uttering oracles.

the benefit of when he addressed them, nothing but inexcusable prejudice and wilful blindness could have prevented them from perceiving and acknowledging that the fulness of time—the time of Messiah—was come, and that Jesus of Nazareth was he. They might also, in connexion with this, have discerned the signs of the times as to their nation, which was evidently fast approaching to its ruin, because of its impiety, which was drawing down on it the vengeance of heaven.

Verse 57: “*Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?*”\* The conclusion to be drawn from all these signs relating to Christ and his gospel was so direct and plain, that these people might have been expected to draw it for themselves, without his doing it for them. They ought to have concluded in favour of Christ’s claims, to have rested in him for salvation, and to have yielded him the cheerful homage of their hearts and lives. This would have been what was right. But their conduct was just the reverse of this: they judged wrong, and rejected him.

The subject of these four verses suggests the following practical observations.

1. *The knowledge of nature, and sagacity in the affairs of this life, have no necessary connexion with saving wisdom, or a correct judgment in spiritual things.* It is very true that there is no incompatibility between piety and great natural talent, literature, and science, nay, that many of the most distinguished philosophers and scholars, have been eminent for piety. At the same time, there are many who can make observations accurately, and draw inferences logically, in the studies of nature, the affairs of common life, and even the more difficult and abstruse sciences, who yet cannot bring as much mind to bear on spiritual things as is necessary to comprehend the rudiments, the first principles, of the doctrine of Christ—who continue ignorant of the plainest religious truths, and who reason most inconclusively and erroneously on almost every peculiarly evangelical topic. This is owing to the darkness which the fall has brought over their minds as to heavenly things. They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their minds. Pride, prejudice,

\* Tertullian (de Coronâ) argues from this verse in favour of the exercise of reason and the right of private judgment, in religious matters: “An non putas omni fideli licere, concipere et constituere dumtaxat quod Deo congruat, quod disciplinæ conducat, quod salutis proficiat, dicente Domino, Cur autem non et a vobis-ipsis quod justum judicatis?”

passion, and the love of sin, blind their souls. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness."—"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"—"Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh are called."

2. *We observe, from these verses, that those persons are inexcusable who are knowing and prudent in other things, but ignorant and improvident as to the concerns of their souls.* What possible excuse can such persons offer? They cannot plead want of capacity; for, they are known to be clever, and they have generally no mean opinion of their own abilities. They cannot plead the small importance of spiritual things; for, their utmost exertions cannot approximate to a calculation of the value of an immortal soul. They cannot plead want of means of information; for, the light shines around them, and they are shutting their eyes against it. Oh, it is a melancholy sight to see a man, in any rank of life, managing his temporal affairs with great shrewdness and success, but neglecting the one thing needful, and allowing all his soul's affairs to go to ruin. And it is a still more melancholy sight to see a man of genius and of cultivated powers, who can trace the history and philosophy of nature and of mind, and who can, let us not say guess at the weather, but, make solar and lunar observations, and calculate a tide table, or an eclipse; but who is yet practically ignorant of the God of nature and of grace, grovelling in low and sensual propensities on the earth, and shutting out, in the vanity of his soul, the light of the Sun of righteousness. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Let it be noted, by all who have any pretensions to common sagacity, that reason requires, and that God enjoins them to bring their minds to bear on spiritual things, and to judge what is right with regard to them. "I speak as unto wise men," saith the apostle, "judge ye what I say."—"O that they were wise, that they understood this," saith the Lord, "that they would consider their latter end." Surely, we shall be all quite inexcusable if we do not give our minds,

with serious application, to this first of concerns. And we shall be inexcusable if we continue ignorant of them when the assistance of the Holy Spirit is promised to guide us to the saving knowledge of them, if we, in a sense of our insufficiency, apply for it. He hides these things from the wise and prudent in their own conceit, and reveals them unto babes. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."

3. *We are here called on to discern the signs of Messiah's time, and to judge rightly with regard to them, by receiving him for ourselves.* Those signs which so many of the Jews rejected, may be still correctly judged of by us, at this remote place and period: and we have the additional signs of the further fulfilment of prophecy, and of the glorious success of the gospel, since those days. On indications, then, of its truth so numerous and strong, let us rest with unhesitating confidence. Why should we be like those unbelieving Jews, who, in the midst of signs, were always asking for more signs? and why should we be like the modern infidels, who are always complaining of a lack of evidence, in the midst of evidence that, for variety and strength, is quite unequalled in any other department of history? In such a case as this, every reasonable man must perceive that that species of demonstration which is called mathematical, is inconsistent with the nature of things. But there is a moral demonstration which is universally felt to be quite sufficient to convince the judgment, and to determine the conduct in other cases; and this exists here in a degree nowhere else to be found. The most sceptical come to decided conclusions, and take important steps, in other cases, on evidence which will not bear a comparison with the evidence of Christianity. Where is the mathematical proof that Alexander reigned in Macedon, or that Titus took Jerusalem? and yet, what man of any information doubts either of the one or of the other? and yet again, the proof for the Gospel facts and doctrines is far stronger. Where is the mathematical proof that there will, next year, be cold and heat, day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest? and yet what sober-minded man entertains any doubt of it? As for the husbandman, he calculates on it, and forms his plans, and goes through his labour, in cheerful expectation accordingly. Let us, therefore, in like manner, rest our souls with firm faith on the Gospel declaration respecting Messiah's past and finished work; let us form all our plans on the



principles of the Word of God; let us live for eternity; and let us wait in hope for all the glorious results of futurity. We are thus exhorted, by the apostle James: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Once more here, this portion of the passage requires us *to discern the signs of our own times*. To what is now passing in the world, and what may by-and-by be expected, we ought not to be inattentive and indifferent. We ought not, indeed, to be rash or dogmatical; and we ought not to advance our own conjectures for certainties: but there is a due medium. Our knowledge of human nature, which is always substantially the same—the past dispensations of providence, which may be considered as a kind of index in similar cases—the general outline, at least, of prophecy, if we cannot be sure as to its exact filling up—and the actual progress of human affairs in nations, and in the Church, may be fairly considered as so many moral prognostications of the future. In these, we ought to discern both what is doing, and what is coming; and by these we ought to be led to prepare and act accordingly. It is difficult to be very minute, with well-founded confidence, in such anticipations: and it is impossible to be minute, so as to meet the views of all. Most, however, will agree in the present existence and general meaning of such signs as the following. The discoveries and improvements making in science and the arts, and in all that adds to the comfort and embellishment of life, are amazing. Political changes are taking place among the nations so rapidly that the mind can hardly mark them so as to retain them. Human knowledge is spreading in every direction; but it is most especially descending to the lower ranks of society. All the corporeal and mental energies of men are drawing forth with hitherto unknown vigour, both for evil and for good. In reference to the state and prospects of religion;—on the one hand indifference, error, superstition, profanity, immorality, and angry disputes among Christians, prevail to a most alarming degree: while, on the other hand, adorning patterns of piety and philanthropy are numerous; powerful, combined, and persevering efforts are making for the diffusion of the light of life; evangelical truth is gaining ground, and the gospel is making its way into countries previously in darkness and in the region

of the shadow of death. Now, taking all these signs together, do they not portend both great judgments and great successes—judgments on the enemies of God, and successes for the gospel? And, in this way, are not things (according to the general declarations of God's Word) fast tending, through previous judgments, to the ultimate and universal triumph of truth and righteousness on the earth, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ? And, is it not our duty to mark these things, and form our plans and conduct on them? Let us not be like the Jews, who were thus complained of by the Lord, "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." Let us rather seek to resemble those "of the children of Issachar, who were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."\* Let us mark the signs of coming judgments, that, betaking ourselves to the covert of a Saviour's merit, and living in the exercise of penitential reformation, we may hide ourselves in secret, till God's wrath be overpast. And let us mark the signs of coming triumph and blessedness for the Church, that we may rejoice in the prospect, and that we may be encouraged to co-operate by our substance, and our example, and our prayers, to hasten on the glory of the latter day. And whether we may live to see much of these judgments and these triumphs or not, let us, at least, espouse and do all we can to forward Christ's cause, while we are here; and let us so live, that when we come to die, we may die in peace, leaving with confidence his cause in his own hands, to be managed by our successors under him, and cheerfully removing from this mixed scene of sunshine and storm, of success and failure, of joy and sorrow, to a world of perfect righteousness and felicity.

Let us now briefly notice the different, though nearly connected subject, in the two remaining verses of the chapter. "*When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.*" What our Lord here says also occurs, in nearly the same words, in the sermon on the mount. It was, doubtless, intended by him to be consi-

\* 1 Chron. xii. 32.

dered, both in the way of literal application to a supposed, but frequently occurring case in common life, and in the way of figurative application to the spiritual condition of sinners in reference to God.

The case supposed is that of a man exposed to a lawsuit, in consequence of having, in some way, injured, or being in debt to a neighbour. The "adversary," is the plaintiff, prosecutor, or legal opponent. It is a good rule to avoid, if possible, all lawsuits. In order to this, something of his own interests should frequently be sacrificed by a man, even when he is conscious that he is altogether in the right. Much more, however, should a man avoid such disputes, if he be in the wrong. "Go not forth hastily to strive," says the wise man, "lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame." Lawsuits are vexatious and expensive. Often, when the loser is ruined, the gainer, as he is called, gets nothing. If such disputes unhappily arise, the sooner they can be settled the better. "Give diligence," says our Lord, give labour, do every thing in your power to be delivered from your adversary; and the word "delivered"\* implies being delivered in the way of being reconciled, of having the dispute made up, so that there may be no danger of further prosecution. The following excellent advice is given by Solomon,† "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, thou art snared with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself; when thou art come into the hand of thy friend, go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler." As instances of the prudent avoiding of danger may be mentioned, Jacob's way of meeting and appeasing his offended brother Esau, and Abigail's conduct towards David.‡ In such a case as that supposed in the passage before us, there can be no doubt that the prudent way is by all means to settle the difference as speedily as possible.

There is, however, a more important meaning couched under this supposition; for, it is also to be considered as a kind of parable, to be figuratively applied to the state of sinners in reference to God. In this figurative sense, it was more immediately addressed to the hypocritical and unbelieving Jews, whose prejudices caused them to overlook the signs

\* Ἀπὸ λαλῶν.

† Prov. vi. 1-5.

‡ Gen. xxxii.; 1 Sam. xxv. 18.

of their time, and to reject the Messiah. All such were here warned to cease from opposing Christ, and to receive him before it was too late to turn, and before the dreadful calamities threatened should actually overwhelm their nation. But the parable is intended also for the instruction of individual sinners of every age and nation. Now, though we ought not to run the parallel too close, we can hardly avoid noticing such coincidences as these, and we shall do well to mark them with seriousness and improve them with care. In consequence of our sins, God has become our adversary. He has a grievous complaint to make against us. We have done him injustice. We owe him a great debt; there is a debt of obedience, which we have not rendered, and a debt of punishment, to which we lie exposed. He has a controversy with us. He is angry with us every day. As we pass on, we are on the way to the judgment-seat. Let us not meditate flight: it is impossible for us to escape; he that fleeth, shall not flee away; and he that escapeth, shall not be delivered. If death come upon us before we are cleared, we must be cast into prison. And what can that prison be, but the prison of hell? "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." The antediluvians, who died in a state of unbelief, are described, by Peter, as "the spirits in prison." How awful and hopeless the situation of such! They cannot be released till they have "paid the very last mite."\* And when shall that be?—Never. Sin is an infinite evil, and deserves an infinite punishment. The sufferings of Christ, though limited to a certain time, had infinite value, because of his Godhead, and are sufficient satisfaction for sin; but the sufferings of the most miserable of the condemned are limited in intensity, by their limited strength to bear them, and therefore, they can never be sufficient satisfaction for sin at any supposable period, however remote, but must be eternal. Besides, what will the unregenerated sufferers be doing in the meantime, but still sinning, and therefore, still incurring new guilt to be suffered for? Let none deceive themselves with the delusions of a fancied purgatory, or place of temporary punishment hereafter. The soul dying under the guilt of any sin whatever, is lost for ever. Between the abodes of the blessed and the miserable, a great gulf is fixed, which it is impossible to pass over. The word "till" does not by any means always imply that, after a certain time,

\* *Answer*, their smallest coin, about the third part of our farthing.

a thing, or state, spoken of, shall cease to be. When Job said, "Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me, my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live;" did he mean to intimate that he would lose his integrity, and that his heart would reproach him when he died? By no means. When our Lord said, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled;" did he mean to teach that the time would ever come when the law should be made void? By no means. When Paul prayed that the Philippians might be "sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;" did that imply that they were to be insincere and offensive after the day of Christ? By no means. So, when Jesus here declares that he who is condemned to the prison of future punishment shall not depart thence, till he has "paid the very last mite;" does he mean to teach that he shall pay the last mite, and then depart? By no means. He teaches the very reverse, in consistency with what he elsewhere declares, that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

How awakening, then, ought this parable to prove to us all! As we cannot escape, so neither can we at all hope to gain the plea, if we presume to go before the bar of God, and plead innocent. If we stand our trial on that ground, we shall certainly be cast and condemned. Let us plead guilty now: let us seek to have the cause settled now. Let us acquaint ourselves now with God, and be at peace, that so good may come unto us. Let us sue for pardon, free pardon. As we cannot pay any part of this great debt, let us pray that God would frankly forgive us the whole. And let us seek deliverance through the appointed channel of faith in the Redeemer's righteousness. Let us be thankful for the surety provided, who kindly stands forward to prevent us from being carried off to prison. As God is in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, let us avail ourselves of this method of reconciliation. Let us submit to our gracious, though injured Lord, and be careful so to offend him no more. And let us give all diligence in this momentous affair. Let us make no delay. While we are in life, we are on the way where we may obtain deliverance; but, if we delay till our journey of life be ended, the opportunity of agreement will be lost. Let each of us profit by the warning of Elihu, "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee."

## LECTURE LXXI.

## LUKE XIII. 1-5.

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2. And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. 4. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

THERE is no passage parallel to this in any of the other three evangelists; nor is there any more full account of the circumstances here related to be found in any other writer, sacred or profane. Some, indeed, think, and they may be right in the opinion, that the Galileans mentioned in the first verse, were some of the followers of Judas Gaulonites, as Josephus calls him,\* or Judas of Galilee, to whom Gamaliel thus briefly refers, in Acts v. 37: “After this man [Theudas] rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.” It may have been, that the resistance of these Galileans to the Roman taxing and authority, suggested to Pilate the idea of availing himself of the opportunity to destroy, in this cruel and impious manner, some of them who had come up to worship at Jerusalem, and who were altogether unsuspecting of such an attack, and altogether unprovided against it. And, as the Galileans were Herod’s subjects, it may have been, as some conjecture, that this horrible deed was either the cause, or the consequence, of the disagreement which existed between Pilate and Herod. “The same day,” says Luke† afterwards, and in reference to a subsequent time, “Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before, they were at enmity between themselves.” At all events, we are here told that Pilate had fallen treacherously

\* Antiquities, xviii. 1.

† Luke xxiii. 12.

on certain Galileans, and cut them off, while they were engaged in the solemn act of offering sacrifice; so that *their own blood was mingled* with that of the victims they were offering. Very similar in its circumstances was the atrocious murder of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, called also Jehoiadah, whom the Jews, at the instigation of king Joash, "slew between the temple and the altar"\*—"in the court of the house of the Lord."

The cruel and profane deed here described appears to have been committed by Pilate but a short time before the period of the sacred history here referred to; that is, before our Lord had delivered the instructions after dining in the house of the Pharisee, as related in the preceding chapter; for "there were present, at that season, some who told Christ" of it, while yet it seemed to have been only partially known. These persons may have mentioned it as a confirmation of the doctrine he had just been teaching with regard to the danger of continuing exposed to the divine displeasure, and the necessity of coming to an agreement with God quickly. Or, they may have done so, with the view of dissuading him from going up to Jerusalem at that time, and thus exposing himself to similar violence. Or, they may have mentioned the circumstance with the design of entangling him in his talk, that they might get an advantage against him. Or, without any particular design, either good or bad, they may have spoken of it merely as a piece of news. However this may have been, one very erroneous idea, at least, pervaded their minds, with regard to the event; and our Lord, according to his usual wise and gracious custom, turned it to good account, by founding on it very important spiritual instruction and warning.

"*And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay.*" In this, our Lord, who knew what was in man, and needed not that any should testify to him, intimated that those who reported this fact to him, looked on the destruction of these Galileans in such a way, as a proof of God's peculiar displeasure because

\* Matt. xxiii. 35; 2 Chron. xxiv. 20. Josephus says that Archelaus sent soldiers into the temple, and slew three thousand men, while they were offering sacrifices at the feast of the passover.—*Wars*, ii. 1. In *Lucius Florus*, iii. 18, there is an account of a frustrated design to kill the two consuls of Rome, at the time of a solemn festival, *Inter sacras et aras*—at the foot of the altar, and in the very midst of the sacred rite.

of their being more than ordinarily wicked persons. Now, this is a very common error; and as so many are prone to fall into it, there must be some appearance of foundation for it—something, in fact, which renders it plausible. There are, indeed, several circumstances which, by being overstretched, are made to support this idea. For example, it is true, that suffering, in any way, and in any degree, is a proof of sin; for, “who ever suffered being innocent, and when,” or where, “were the” absolutely “righteous cut off?” And it is true that the heaviest judgments that befall any of the children of men here, are less than their iniquities deserve, and that it is of God’s mercies that we are not all utterly consumed, and because his compassions fail not. It is true, also, that the providence of God is more or less immediately concerned in all such dispensations: “Shall there be evil,” that is, calamity, or temporal evil, “in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?” Nay, it is even true that God does sometimes let fall his heavy judgments on ungodly persons, as an obvious and intentional expression of his righteous displeasure with them because of their more than usually daring wickedness. As examples of this, may be mentioned the death of Nadab and Abihu, of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, of Herod, and of Ananias and Sapphira. In such cases as these, the inference of the sin from the punishment is surely just. At the same time, it is dangerous, uncharitable, and erroneous, to lay it down as a general rule to judge of men’s state and character from their outward lot in this life. It is to be remembered that extraordinary interpositions of Providence, for the vindication of God’s justice in this life on individual transgressors, are but rare. Many of them escape every thing of that kind. Judgment, in that way, is God’s “strange work.” The general course of Providence is stated in such passages as these of Solomon: “For all this I considered in my heart, even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love, or hatred, by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all.”—“I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither



yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill: but time and chance happen to them all. For, man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." Hence, great caution is necessary in interpreting providences, and our general rule ought to be that they are not to be viewed as indications of the comparative excellence, or sinfulness, of men, or of the peculiar complacency, or displeasure, of the Almighty. It is plain that such marks are often completely misapplied. Our Lord found it necessary to correct the judgment of his own disciples, in the case of the man who was born blind: \* "Master," said they, "who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents"—that is, it was not because either of the parties was guilty of extraordinary sin—"but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." How egregiously did the inhabitants of Melita, too, err in the hasty opinion they at first formed, on a similar principle, of the apostle Paul! When they saw the venomous beast, the viper, come out of the bundle of sticks which was laid on the fire, and fasten and hang on that holy man's hand, "they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." It has been often observed, in like manner, that the judgment of Job's miserable comforters was quite erroneous, in supposing that his accumulated afflictions were indications of his hypocrisy, and general wickedness. "Is not thy wickedness great," said Eliphaz, "and are not thine iniquities infinite?"—"Therefore, snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee." In the case before us, the hard judgment of these people was very rash. The Galileans might, indeed, have been notorious transgressors; but, for aught that appeared, they might have suffered even as martyrs suffer in the service of God. Our Lord, indeed, though he did not pronounce farther on their character, said expressly that they were not transgressors beyond others: "Suppose ye that these were sinners above all the Galileans?"—"I tell you, Nay."

Not content with this declaration, he immediately added, "*But, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" In these words, he turned their thoughts inward on themselves,

\* John ix. 2.

reminded them of their own exposed situation, as unpar-  
 doned and impenitent sinners, warned them of the calamities  
 which were coming on the nation, and directed forward their  
 attention, beyond all earthly events, to the coming wrath of  
 God, which, whether it overtook the impenitent in this  
 world or not, would certainly overtake them at the day of  
 judgment and perdition of ungodly men; and, not content  
 even with this, he brought forward a similar catastrophe  
 himself, and drew the same inference from it: "*Or those  
 eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them,  
 think ye that they were sinners\* above all men that dwelt in  
 Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay.*" Siloam was a fountain  
 without the walls of Jerusalem, from which a fine and quiet  
 stream ran into the city; and its water is believed to have  
 been received into a basin called the pool of Siloam, and also  
 the pool of Bethesda. The Jews, of old, were blamed by  
 the Lord, through Isaiah, for "refusing the waters of Shi-  
 loah that go," or flow, "softly;" that is, for undervaluing  
 the gentle government and great privileges of which these  
 soft-flowing waters were poetically used as an emblem.†  
 The basin, or pool, was near the temple, and much fre-  
 quented for ceremonial purification. Somewhere near, but  
 how situated is not exactly known, stood a tower. This  
 tower, we are told, had suddenly fallen, and killed eighteen  
 persons. Of this awful event we know nothing beyond  
 what is thus very briefly mentioned; but it appears to have  
 been well known at the time referred to. Such an event  
 as this might, even more readily than the other, have been  
 interpreted as a proof of the extraordinary wickedness of  
 the sufferers, inasmuch as it was without human inter-  
 ference, and came immediately from God's providence.  
 Still, however, Jesus taught that such an interpretation of  
 it would have been rash and erroneous. When Job's sons  
 and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest  
 brother's house, behold, there came a great wind from the  
 wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it  
 fell upon them, and killed them. That was an event some-  
 what like this mentioned by Christ; but it would be most  
 unreasonable to look on it as a proof that Job's piously  
 educated family were all more than ordinarily great sinners.  
 Our Lord, then, repeats the same lesson and warning as  
 before, saying, "I tell you, Nay: *but, except ye repent, ye*

\* 'Οφειλταί, debtors.

† 2 Kings xx. 20; Neh. iii. 15; Isa. viii. 6; John v. 2, ix. 7.

*shall all likewise\* perish.*" Both the cases before us afforded a very exact representation of the manner in which many of the impenitent Jews met their death in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. They were assembled for the feast of the passover, when they were besieged till the city was broken up; and then multitudes of them were slain with the sword, and had their blood, in effect, mingled with their sacrifices; and multitudes were crushed in the ruins of the city. Josephus† relates different instances, at different times, in which the temple was besmeared with the blood of the slain: and when he is describing the attack made on the temple by Titus, he says, "A multitude of dead bodies lay in heaps round the altar, the blood ran down the steps of the temple, and many perished by the falling ruins of the towers or porches." Our Lord had, probably, a reference to these events. But we are also to consider him as teaching that, in whatever way they may pass through this world, and by whatever means they may be taken out of it, all finally impenitent sinners shall perish, in being condemned to endless misery, by a justly offended God.

Now, there are several lessons which we ought to learn from this passage. We may hence learn,

1. *To beware of rashly judging others.* On this point enough, perhaps, has been already said. Let us, then, be conscientious with regard to it. Let us think of the guilt which we should thus incur, and also of the retribution in kind, which we should thereby prepare for ourselves. "Judge not," saith our Saviour, "that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

2. We may hence learn *not to be too hasty in interpreting afflictive dispensations of providence against ourselves.* We may sometimes hear a person who is labouring under great reverses, or heavy bodily distress, express himself thus, "Surely I must be a very great sinner, else such things could never have been laid on me." If his meaning, in expressing himself thus, be that he is a great sinner in himself, that he suffers less than he deserves, that he might justly be cast off altogether, and that he ought to humble himself under the rod, and consider well what ought to be amended in his feelings and character; nothing can be more

\* Perish thus, or in the same manner, ὡσαυτως and ὁμοίως.

† De Bello, Jud. vi.

proper. But if his meaning be, that such sufferings are a proof that he is a sinner beyond others, and that he is still unpardoned and unrenewed, and that God is treating him as an enemy, and probably will cast him off for ever; nothing can be more hasty. The truth of the case may be the very opposite; and, if his humility be real, probably is the very opposite. Let all afflicted souls learn to seek to God for the sanctified use of their trouble, and support under it; and let none vex themselves with dark surmises whose trust is in the God of mercy. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."—"Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

3. We may hence learn *to be thankful for our own preservation*. When we hear of the heavy calamities, and the sudden removal of others, let us bless God for our own safety. What but his kind care has preserved us? Let us be thankful for our ordinary and daily preservation, and especially for signal deliverances. Let us be thankful, too, for our quietness and safety during our solemn religious services. When we think what blindness, unbelief, wandering of thought, and varied sinfulness, mix even with our very best services, and especially with our worst, how thankful should we be that the Lord has not broken in and made a breach on us, and mingled our blood with our sacrifices.

4. We learn from this passage, that *it is our duty to mark and improve calamities, and especially, violent and sudden deaths*. It is right to speak of them to each other, with a view to our mutual benefit. When God's judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world should learn righteousness. When we hear of the sudden removal of others, we should remember that we too are exposed to be brought to an equally unexpected death in various ways: and we should feel ourselves called on to attend to the warning, "Be ye also ready: for, in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

But there is one other lesson from this passage, on which I am especially desirous of fixing your attention, namely, *the necessity of genuine repentance*. Our Lord himself here says twice, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Consider, then, what is implied in repentance unto salvation; and seek to become possessed of it.

It implies, and indeed chiefly consists in, a *change of mind*. So the original word employed here exactly signifies. It mainly consists in an inward and radical change. It is true that Christian penitence corrects outward crimes; but then, it has that good effect chiefly by its having made a lodgement in the inner man, and having produced a decided revolution there. It traces the polluted streams to the fountain; it detects the origin of the evil in the disordered state of the soul, and it comes along with the discovery and the rectification of the blindness of the understanding, the perversion of the will, and the disaffection of the heart. It is plain that there may be some outward amendment, where there is no such inward change; that a regard to reputation, worldly interest, and various other inadequate considerations, may produce a restraint on actual habits of sin, where the heart is still hankering after them; that actions may be good, as to their letter and matter, but bad as to their spirit and motives; and that his acquaintances may be pleased, and look on a man as a reformed man, when God considers him as still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Hence the Psalmist, in his desire after repentance, begins at the source, confessing that he was "shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin," and applying for a thorough inward change, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Thus, though repentance has other characteristics, it is, when traced up to its first principles, essentially the same with the great saving change called regeneration, and conversion.

But more particularly, true repentance implies a *conviction* of sin—a conviction not merely of the fact of sin, but of the evil of sin—of its unreasonable, base, odious, and defiling nature—of its exceeding sinfulness. It implies *grief* on account of sin, and a *hatred* of it;—not merely in reference to its painful consequences (though that view of it is not to be excluded), but in reference to its own enormity. That man has obviously not truly repented of his profligate habits, who is sorry, only because they have ruined his health, or substance, or character, and who would have continued quite easy in his mind, if none of these disagreeable consequences had followed. So, in general, that is not true repentance, which is only a hatred and a dread of hell, and not a hatred and a dread of sinning—only a regret that a man has disregarded his own happiness, and not a regret that he has been guilty of the baseness and ingratitude of disregard-

ing God. The true penitent says, "Against thee," O Lord, "thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." It implies, too, *actual reformation*. Who would believe that man to be sincere, who, having injured a person, came repeatedly to express his sorrow, but always persevered in the same conduct? But the life of some people seems to be a perpetual struggle between conscience and vice, or carelessness—a perpetual alternation of a certain kind of repenting, and of actual sinning. Such repentance is spurious and useless. There is an inseparable connexion between true repentance and actual reformation. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin."—"Bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

Genuine repentance, farther, *cannot be without faith in the Redeemer*. Without this, repentance can only be the sorrow of the world that worketh death. Natural convictions of sin may, and indeed must, arise before there is any true religion: but, in order to convictions of that kind being of any use, there must be a discovery of the way of pardon; and in order to their issuing in repentance unto salvation, there must be an actual apprehension, or laying hold of that pardon. Now, the gospel scheme clearly teaches that the divine mercy flows to sinners through the meritorious obedience and death of Christ, by faith. Hence, repentance is neither the ground of forgiveness, nor the means of obtaining it. They greatly err who speak, or think, of making atonement for their sins by repentance; or, of being forgiven for Christ's sake through repentance. All the atonement which ever can be made for sin, is made already, and made by Jesus Christ: and he is "set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Repentance unto life, being a particular description of the saving change, comes in the way of the knowledge and belief of the truth: it neither goes before, nor tarries long behind, the reception of the gospel; but it comes in immediate connexion with it. The Christian preacher, therefore, testifies both "repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, nothing but the believing view, the actual apprehension of the love of God in Christ, can excite feelings of genuine, holy, filial contrition. As long as God is looked on as an enemy, there can be no adequate feeling of the baseness of offending him; but when he is seen to be a friend and a reconciled Father, then sin, which is committed against him, is seen to be exceedingly vile and abomin-

able. It is right that the law should be preached in all its terrors, that the tremendous consequences of sin should be dwelt on in all their bearings, and that remorse should be felt in all its bitterness: but these are only like the messenger of the wilderness preparing the way for the Messenger of the covenant; these are useful to alarm the conscience, but they cannot pacify, or purify it; these may sweep away the refuges of lies, but they cannot conduct to a place of safety; these may shake the heart, but they cannot soften it. Something more is necessary to turn into repentance unto life that first repentance, of which it is difficult to know how it may terminate. Something more is wanting to melt down the soul into true contrition, to effect a permanent and decided change on the mind itself, to draw off the affections from the love of sin, and to operate as a constant and sweetly constraining motive to outward reformation; and that is found in the gospel—that is felt in the grace of God which bringeth salvation—that is received in the reception of pardon—that is clearly seen in the believing looking unto Jesus, even Jesus crucified for our sins. According to Zechariah, it is in looking to Him whom they have pierced, that sinners mourn aright. This union of repentance with faith and love is finely illustrated in the case of the woman who was a sinner: “She brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at Jesus’ feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”—“And he said unto the woman, Thy sins are forgiven,”—“Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

To all this let there be added the consideration that *true repentance is the gift of God*. Nature cannot produce such fruit. Conscience, if not utterly seared, may be stung with remorse; fear, the companion of guilt, may agitate the mind which still clings to its idols; and the determined dwelling of a man’s own thoughts on his state, or the faithful warnings of his monitor, may excite an apprehension of coming wrath, but it is only the Author of our nature that can renovate it; it is only the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost that can root out the love of sin, and implant the love of holiness. Speaking of Jesus who was crucified, Peter says (Acts v. 31), “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of

sins." Let this be habitually remembered, so that when the duty of repentance is placed before us, we may also look on it as a grace, and when we are commanded to repent and turn ourselves from all our transgressions, we may betake ourselves to God in the prayer, "Turn thou us and we shall be turned, for thou art the Lord our God."

You see, then, the nature of true repentance; you see how different it is from the flimsy restraints, the unbelieving and fruitless mental horrors, the outward mortifications and observances, the professed sorrow without real amendment, and the self-righteous feelings and doings which are substituted for the atonement of Christ, or for the justifying grace of faith—and, in short, from the various delusions which, under the name of penance, are imposed on superstitious Romanists, or which, under the name of repentance, pass current with too many among ourselves. It is not enough, however, to have learned the correct theory of repentance: you must yourselves be true penitents. Think again of the absolute necessity of this. Listen attentively to the words of Christ himself, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Inquire, I beseech you, whether you have repented or not. Consider whether you have undergone the change which repentance implies—whether the gospel, brought home to your souls by the power of the Holy Ghost, have humbled, and saved, and reformed you. However it may have been heretofore with you, in order that you may be stirred up to renewed exercises, or brought to the first exercise of repentance, carefully use the means which, under God, are calculated to make you truly contrite. Compare your character with the law of God; for, "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Study deeply the wondrous display, at once of the evil of sin, and of the love of God, given in the atonement of his Son: and look to God for pardon and purification.

"God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent;" he therefore commandeth all of you to repent, and that whatever may be your state. You all need repentance. Those of you who have already repented and believed the gospel, still need to repent, as well as to believe. Repentance should be your daily work; for, what a mixture of imperfection is there in your whole character! Nay, so far is it from being the case that repentance is not a proper exercise for those who are in a state of favour with God, that, whatever convictions of a certain kind may be felt before (as we have already seen), repentance unto life does



not, and cannot come but along with the reception of the divine favour; and it is after God has forgiven sinners, that their contrition is most deep and most ingenuous. "I will establish my covenant with thee: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Let, then, his reconciled people humble themselves greatly before him at this time.

But surely those of you who have never yet repented, are especially called on, by this passage, to repent and turn to the Lord. And, if you feel, and are ready to acknowledge that you ought to do so, what do you think will be the best time for it? Do you say, "When we are near the grave," or, "When we are sick," or, "A year hence," or, "To-morrow?" Put not off this concern even till to-morrow. You may not live to see to-morrow: or, though you live long, you may still think that you have no leisure, and that there is no danger; and you may still feel altogether averse from serious consideration. Think if you can by any possibility provide for your safety, if your days be numbered while you are yet impenitent. Whither can you haste for security? to whom can you look for help? what swiftness can convey you beyond the reach of danger? what power can resist omnipotence? what stratagem can elude omniscience? what darkness can conceal you from God's eye? what arguments can prove that you ought not to suffer? what multitudes, joining hand in hand, can cause you to pass unpunished? How can you but perish, if you do not repent? How can you escape, if you neglect the great salvation? It is only now that true repentance is possible: it is only now that is the accepted time, and now that is the day of salvation. *Now* God is willing to receive the worst of you into favour, if you come to him in the way of his appointment. Now, then, before your consciences, be entirely seared, and your evil habits be irrevocably confirmed, and your faculties be impaired, and stupor seize you, and terror freeze you, and your eyes close on the things of time, and your ears shut to the calls of mercy: now—before you retire in self-righteous complacency, or thoughtless indifference, or sullen despair, to lay you down and die: now—before you be prematurely plucked off the tree, like green fruit, or fall down into perdition by the inevitable progress of corruption, as rotten fruit drops to the ground by its own weight: now—before the

hour come when you shall find no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears: now—while the Father of mercies waits for you, and the Son of his love pleads with you, and the Spirit of grace strives with you, and the voice of the preacher calls to you, and your own bosoms, it may be, respond with at least some faint echo to the call, and so many favourable circumstances occur which may never occur again: *now*, suffer an adequate conviction of your guilt, misery, and danger, to come home to you, and welcome, at the same time, the message of salvation. “Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness.” *Now*, not only form the purpose in God’s strength, but carry it into immediate execution. Let joy be occasioned in heaven among the angels of God by your present repentance. Let the purpose, too, so far accomplished, be yet ever present to your minds for its more full accomplishment. Leave it not behind you here, as if all were done. Carry it in your breasts to your homes. Bear it along with you through life. Let your hearts be always tender; and walk ever softly before the Lord. Thus, though you sow in tears, you shall reap in joy. The Lord will put off your sackcloth, and gird you with gladness; and the trials of your faith and the sorrows of your penitence, shall be forgotten in the fruition of heavenly sight, and in the triumphs of a blessed eternity.

## LECTURE LXXII.

LUKE XIII. 6-9.

"He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8. And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9. And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

SINCE this season of last year, multitudes have passed into eternity—some ripe for glory, others for destruction. God has employed various methods to remove them—some slow and comparatively easy, others sudden and awfully calamitous. In all cases, rash judgments are to be avoided; and, instead of wasting our thoughts in the generally useless and erroneous, and frequently hurtful and sinful, employment of coming to a decision as to what we suppose to have been the character, and to be now the state, of those who are taken away, it concerns us to take warning and to get personal good from their removal ourselves. Our Lord taught his hearers thus to improve the two appalling events mentioned in the preceding part of the chapter. He recalled their attention from others to themselves, and twice addressed them in the awakening language, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." As to the parable of the barren fig tree, which we have just read—it was evidently spoken by our Lord to enforce the same warning. Let us proceed to its exposition.

The parable refers primarily to the Jewish nation. God chose them out of all the nations of the earth, to be a peculiar people to himself; and he bestowed on them many temporal and religious privileges, which called for a return of the warmest gratitude, and most devoted obedience. But they, in general, failed to improve their privileges, and dishonoured the Lord; so that he threatened to destroy them altogether as a nation, and did repeatedly visit them with

dreadful judgments. All this, in regard to the nation, is represented in several passages of Scripture, under the similitude of a vineyard, or garden, marked off from the surrounding country, inclosed, fenced, planted with vines and various kinds of fruit-trees, and carefully cultivated; but which, not producing fruit as might have been expected, the owner threatens to lay waste. Of these passages, the following from the 5th chapter of Isaiah, is peculiarly full and striking. "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved, touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And, now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." The Jewish nation, generally speaking, were unfruitful—that is, unbelieving and disobedient. Many warnings were given them by the prophets: and Christ and his apostles laboured diligently in preaching to them the gospel of the kingdom. A few of them were, indeed, converted; but the great majority of them continued obstinately to reject the truth, so that, at last, their city and nation were destroyed by the Romans—the Jewish tree, so to speak, was cut down. The measure of their sins being filled up, the wrath came upon them to the uttermost.

But, as the Jewish people were a representation of the whole visible Church, this parable has a further reference to all who enjoy the means of grace, and furnishes a serious warning to all such to examine whether their state and character correspond with their privileges. It applies to

individuals, as well as to the Jewish nation and the Church at large. Thus, the Baptist addressed his warning, in very similar language, to every individual: "Now also the axe is laid unto," or, even now the axe lieth at, "the root of the trees: therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." It is in this, at once more general and more particular way, then, as including ourselves, that we are chiefly called on to consider the parable.

"*A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard.*" The "certain man," or rather, the certain one, or certain person, represents God. "My Father is the husbandman," said Jesus, on a similar occasion. His vineyard is the visible Church. The fig tree represents every individual in that Church—every person who bears the Christian name, and enjoys any outward Christian privileges. *We are all in this vineyard. We are not like the fig tree by the wayside. We are not in a heathen land, but in a Christian. We were born of professedly, and, it may be, truly Christian parents; we have been baptized; we were instructed in religion from our youth; and we have the written Word of God, a Christian ministry, and public ordinances. We are, as the Psalmist expresses it, "planted in the house of the Lord," that we may "flourish in the courts of our God, and bring forth fruit."* So many and so great are our advantages, that the Lord may also most justly ask, with regard to us, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"

The parable goes on to say that the owner of the fig tree "*came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*" Such an examination and such an expectation, in those circumstances, are quite natural. So, spiritually, the Lord is not indifferent to the state of the visible Church, but takes a lively interest in its prosperity. He is represented as observing carefully what effects the means of grace are producing. He is well entitled to expect fruit; and if there be none, he cannot but be displeased. And, be it observed, there must be actual fruit: the leaves of ordinary profession are not enough, the blossom of higher promise is not enough, for there must be fruit. Some trees in the garden of the Lord bear fruit, but on this tree he found none. No believer bears so much barren as he ought, but this tree is descriptive of the totally barren professor—of the merely nominal Christian.

In order to perceive who they are that may be thus described, let us consider what is meant by the fruit which

true Christians must bear. Here we must observe that some bear fruit of a certain description, but not good fruit, not such as God approves. Some of that fruit is obviously bad; and the rest of it is really bad, though it looks well. "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter." Some actions are good only as useful to others in their consequences, and not good in their principles and motives. Some are well compared to "wild grapes," and to certain species of fruits which are always sour, unless the trees which bear them be ingrafted on a different stock, to improve their quality. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God;" human nature, in its unregenerated state, cannot bring forth good fruit. "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." In short, in order to bear good fruit, a man must be pardoned and accepted through faith in the righteousness of Christ, and regenerated through the influences of the Holy Spirit. And then, the fruits which the Lord expects to find in believers are just all the graces of the divine life. In writing to the Galatians, the apostle gives us this enumeration of these fruits, as contrasted with the works of the flesh: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Let us examine ourselves by such a list as this, that we may know whether we be fruitful or not. Paul also prays for the Philippians, that they may be "filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God:" and he says to the faithful at Rome, "Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." This, then, is the fruit which every true Christian bears; but on the tree typical of the barren professor, the Lord found none.

"Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard"—perhaps, Jesus Christ may be considered as the chief vine-dresser,

and every minister as a labourer in the vineyard under him—*“Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none.”* One year after fruit might reasonably be expected to appear, might be thought by a gardener but a short time to wait; but three years would be, in many cases, at least, a sufficient trial. There are some who think that our Lord, in fixing on this period, referred to the duration of his own public ministry to the Jews, which had now lasted about three years, but had been altogether unsuccessful with the generality of them. This may have been so: he is surely to be considered, however, as also speaking thus to denote, more generally, the long-suffering of God. And has he not waited as long as this for many of you? nay, has he not waited several times three years for some of you? Is he not, then, well entitled to speak of your barrenness with indignation? You could not object to the justice of the sentence, *“Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”* or, why should the ground be also useless? A barren tree is not only useless, but hurtful, in a garden. It occupies space which might be employed to some good purpose; it draws away the strength of the ground for some distance all around; and it overshadows and injures other trees and plants, so that nothing can thrive in its vicinity. In like manner, those who are not Christians indeed, are not only useless, but hurtful to religion in the visible Church. They occupy stations in vain which might be usefully held by others; they discourage the pious; and they injure others, by their example at least, if not by their more direct endeavours. And, as the larger and more luxuriant the barren tree is, the more harm it does in the garden; so, the more conspicuous, in respect of rank, property, power, or unsanctified talents, any unconverted man is, the greater injury does he, in general, occasion to the cause of Christ in society. On all such cumberers, the sentence of divine justice is, *Cut them down*—afflict them by judgments, take them off by death, and consign them to destruction.

Now, it is well worth inquiry why this sentence is not, in every case, immediately executed. Many ungodly persons presume on the divine forbearance, so as to encourage themselves to persevere in sin. *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore their heart is fully set in them to do evil.”* But to what is this forbearance owing? It is not owing to any indifference on the part of God to the honour of his law and government. *“The*

Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The true reason, in connexion with God's long-suffering, is the power of intercessory prayer. "*And he,*" that is, the dresser of the vineyard, "*answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also.*" We shall probably get at the full meaning of this by considering it as referring first to the intercession of Christ, and then to the intercession of every faithful labourer employed by him in his vineyard. Each of these is important in its own place. The intercession of Christ has a value of its own, and altogether different from that of the intercession of mere men; for, his intercession is meritorious, and him the Father heareth always, and that for his own sake. It is, no doubt, owing primarily to his intercession, that the present frame of things is maintained, notwithstanding man's apostasy, and more particularly, that those for whom the Lord has a purpose of mercy are spared till the set time to favour them is come. In connexion with this, though in a very inferior sense, comes the intercession of Christ's people, and especially of Christ's ministers—an intercession not of meritorious, but of earnest prayer—an intercession which, when it is heard, is heard not for their sakes, but for his sake. We repeatedly read of the lives of the Israelites being spared, for the time, in consequence of the intercession of Moses. At the time of the trespass in the affair of the golden calf,\* "*The Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.*" But when "*Moses besought the Lord his God*" in behalf of the people, "*the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do*" unto them. Hence the words of the Psalmist,† "*Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.*" In this, Moses appears to have acted both as an individual believer for himself, and as a type of Christ. Fine instances of earnest and successful intercessory prayer are also found in the history of Joshua, Jeremiah, Elijah, and Daniel.‡ In like manner, the prayers of ministers and others are, doubtless, of much efficacy still, through the great Intercessor, in stay-

\* Exod. xxxii. 9.

† Ps. cvi. 23.

‡ Josh. vii. 7; Jer. xxxii. 16; Dan. ix. 5; James v. 18.



ing the stroke which would cut off the ungodly, and in prevailing for their being spared a little longer in the land of the living and the place of hope.

“Let it alone this year also, *till I shall dig about it, and dung it.*” This comparison, drawn from the well-known procedure of the husbandman, or gardener, teaches us that our prayers for the sparing of the ungodly ought to be accompanied with actual endeavours for their conversion. And so they are. Other means are employed for the benefit of sinners; and the same means as formerly, but more earnestly. Endeavours are made to awaken them to flee from wrath by the threatenings of the law, and to encourage them to come to God by the promises of the gospel. And is not this exactly what is now doing with you, whom, though unfruitful, God has hitherto graciously spared? Is he not giving you line upon line, and precept upon precept? Is he not continuing and multiplying means to make an impression on you?

“*And if it bear fruit, well.*” The word “well” is here very properly supplied, to complete the sense, according to the idiom of our language, though there is no word corresponding to it in the original.\* Literally, it will be satisfactory to the owner; and the tree itself will be allowed to remain. Figuratively, too, it will be well, if the person so spared begin to bear the fruits of righteousness. The labourers, or ministers, will rejoice; the angels in heaven will rejoice; Jesus Christ, seeing the travail of his soul, will be satisfied; and his most gracious Father will be pleased, and will say, “It is meet that we should make merry and be glad.” It will be well, too, for the sinner, if he improve and turn to the Lord. Such a figurative tree, instead of being nigh unto cursing, will receive blessing from the Lord. It shall flourish and bring forth fruit below, and in due time, be transplanted to paradise, where it shall flourish and bring forth fruit for ever.

\* *Και μιν ἰσποίησιν παρπών· εἰ δὲ μήγε, &c.* This sort of an ellipsis, requiring a whole clause to be supplied, as the sense may demand, is quite according to the use of pure classical writers. Thus, in Thucydides, near the beginning of his third book, *Ἦν μιν συμβῆ ἡ σιώρα· εἰ δὲ μή,* If the attempt succeed (well), but if not, &c.—In Aristophanes, Plutus, 144,

—*Και μιν ἀποφηνῶ—*

—*εἰ δὲ μή—*

In Xenophon, this figure occurs frequently; as in *Cyropæd.*, lib. iv., *Καὶ νυν εἰ μιν Κυρὸς βουλιτῶν· εἰ δὲ μή, &c.* And in Polybius, *Ἐὰν μιν ἱκανοὶς ποιῶσιν· εἰ δὲ μή, &c.*

But, observe, it is only a reprieve that is asked, not perpetual impunity in sin. A barren fig tree may be allowed to stand for a time, but it will not be kept after all hope of fruit from it is at an end. So, though God bear with sinners long, he will not bear with them always. "His Spirit will not always strive with man." The unfruitful, the unbelieving, impenitent, and disobedient, shall certainly be cut off at last; and the longer they are spared, and the greater the opportunities and privileges they have abused, the heavier will be their destruction. They shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. This sentence and doom all the holy creatures of God shall acknowledge to be just and right; and they shall praise God because his judgments are made manifest. Awful to think, too, the great, meritorious, and merciful Intercessor himself shall agree to let the sentence of condemnation take its course! "*And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*" Surely it must add tenfold misery to the sentence, that it will be approved, nay, pronounced, that it may be executed in all its horror, by the gracious Redeemer, at that dread hour, when, in the character of judge, he shall consign the unprofitable servant to be cast into outer darkness, where there are weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In further improving this parable, I would observe,

1. That *it cuts up all pleas of negative goodness*. It is, indeed, part of the character of believers, that they are "blameless and harmless, the children of God, without rebuke;"\* but there is a way of speaking of harmlessness quite inconsistent with that commendation. It is not unusual to hear people speaking of themselves with much self-complacency, and as having nothing to fear, because, as they imagine and say, they have done nobody any harm, and have behaved decently. This cannot be absolutely true, even in the low sense in which they use the expression. But, granting it to be true, in so far, at least, as that they have not been guilty of flagrant injustice, or mischief to their fellow-creatures, or gross, positive, and open contempt of God: have they forgotten that much more than this is required? Have they forgotten their inward depravity, and their sins of omission? Have they forgotten that God requires not only certain bad things to be avoided, but certain good things to be done?—that he requires positive obedience?—that he expects them to do all they can for his

\* Phil. ii. 15.

glory, and for the good of his creatures? The harmlessness of such persons is very different from the harmlessness of the children of God; for, no sooner does the apostle describe them as "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," than he adds, "among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." It is impossible that a man can be decent, if he be not pious, or that he can be blameless, if he be not useful. Yet it is plain that some people's ideas of goodness of character go no farther than the negative, or than that there are no very glaring, positive crimes to lay to their charge. Let them not forget that unproductiveness is decidedly criminal. A poisonous tree is, no doubt, worse than a barren tree; still, however, the barren tree will be cut down, as a cumberer of the ground.

2. This parable calls on you to *examine yourselves whether you be barren, or fruitful; and to follow out the result aright, whatever it may be.* It will not be difficult for most of you to ascertain whether you be living to God or to the world; and, in some cases, the consciousness of your doing the one or the other will be present to your minds, without any effort of formal inquiry. How awakening ought this parable to be to you who are in a state of natural barrenness! You are barren as to God's service, bringing no revenue of glory to him. You are barren as to the Saviour, and virtually say, "Let him find satisfaction where he may, in seeing the travail of his soul; he shall find none in us." You are so far barren to the community, that you contribute nothing to its interest by a pious example, and spread the contagion, if not of vice, by an immoral, at least of carelessness, by a careless conduct. You are barren as to the interests of the Church; for, you care for none of these things, or directly oppose them, or meddle with them in such a way as rather to injure than benefit them. And you are barren as to yourselves; for, whatever you may acquire of worldly gain or pleasure, what real profit can there be to you in such things at last, when your everlasting welfare is neglected and forgotten? It is well if any of you are beginning to be undeceived. To such we say, "What fruit have ye of these things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of these things is death." The Lord is now looking upon you; and, if any of you say, "I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not; he will deliver your soul from going into the pit, and your life shall see the

light."—"Turn not aside any more after vain things which cannot profit, nor deliver;" but turn at once to the Lord. Apprehend, in order to your becoming fruitful, the necessity of being united to Christ—of being ingrafted, as it were, into him; and receive him by faith. These are his own words, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."—"Without me ye can do nothing."—"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

But, if you are already bearing fruit unto God, there is still instruction for you here. Feel reminded what your character is, and what is expected of you: and seek to be still more fruitful. Confess your shortcomings, and be desirous to be more productive. Let the warnings presented to you in the removal of others, and in your own troubles, operate as an incitement to your greater diligence. "Every branch in me," saith Christ, "that beareth not fruit, my Father taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." You, too, are enjoying additional advantages of culture, in the vineyard of God; that is, you are still enjoying the benefit of providences and ordinances: of you, therefore, also, a corresponding improvement is expected. See, then, that you "walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

3. This parable calls on us all to be *thankful to the Lord for sparing us hitherto*. It gives this call to us without exception, and especially if any of us have been spared in the time of great danger, restored from severe sickness. It calls very plainly on the unconverted to be thankful; for where would they now have been, had they been cut off in their sins? It calls on believers, also, to be thankful for being spared, for thus they have an opportunity of doing more good, and of obtaining a more complete preparation for heaven. It becomes, therefore, every one of us to say with Hezekiah, "The grave cannot praise thee, O Lord; death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee; as I do this day."

In the last place. *Let none of us so abuse God's sparing mercy as to presume on it for the future; but let us all*

*improve the present season without delay, and hold ourselves in constant readiness for death.* Let the ungodly remember that a reprieve is not a pardon; and therefore, instead of presuming on it to the neglect of salvation, let them improve it for the very purpose of securing their salvation, and thus expostulate with every one who can thus abuse God's goodness, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?" Neither let this sparing mercy be abused by believers; but let them too remember the uncertain tenure by which they hold life and all its opportunities, and be careful to improve them to the utmost, while yet they are theirs. None of us knows whether he may be "let alone" to live out this year. The angel of death is hovering around us, and God only knows who of us shall be the first victim. The axe may not even be lying at the root of the tree of our life, it may be lifted up, and about to fall with the fatal stroke. Lord, grant that we may be ready for that stroke, whenever it descends! Lord, grant that the same blow which fells our body to the earth, may dismiss our souls to heaven!

## LECTURE LXXIII.

LUKE XIII. 10-17.

“ And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. 12. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day. 15. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? 16. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day? 17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.”

DURING the whole of his public ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ was most diligent in working the work of Him that sent him. While every day of the week was employed by him in labouring for the good of the bodies and souls of men, the Sabbath was especially signalized by many of his wonderful works of mercy. On that day, he was careful to attend religious ordinances in the temple, or some of the synagogues; thereby embracing the best opportunities of usefulness, honouring the public service of God, and setting before his people, in every age, an example that they should follow his steps. We formerly read \* that, when he came to Nazareth, “ he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, as his custom was:” and in the passage now under review, we are told that on a certain occasion, not particularly specified as to time, or place, “ *he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.*” From his mode of procedure in the synagogue at Nazareth, it appears that he sometimes taught by reading and expounding a passage of Scripture; whereas, on other occasions, we find him speaking without

\* Luke iv. 16. See Lecture on that passage, for an account of the institution of Synagogues.

any particular reference to the Old Testament, and directly from the suggestions of his own divine mind at the time. And is he not now in the midst of our assembly, ready to teach us? "In all places where I record my name," saith Jehovah, "I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." "Go and teach all nations," saith our Lord, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." May he now vouchsafe to us his gracious presence and blessing, that we may find it good for us to be here!

It was our Lord's usual way, you will be aware, to connect his miracles with his teaching: the advantage of this was obvious; for, his miracles tended to awaken deep attention to his teaching, and were a proof of the truth of what he said. "Rabbi," said Nicodemus, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." On this occasion, an opportunity presented itself of working a most gracious miracle in the midst of the assembly: for, "*behold, there was*" present "*a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.*" She laboured under some disorder which, whatever it was, had so contracted, or relaxed, her frame (for, in either case, the appearance produced would be much the same), that her body was very much bent together, and bound down towards the ground; and her infirmity, or weakness, was so great, that she was not able, in any degree, to raise herself up, and stand straight. This would have been a very heavy affliction in any case; but, in this case, it was aggravated by its being, what is here called, "a spirit of infirmity;" that is, by its being brought on her, in some way, by the agency of an evil spirit. Various passages of Scripture show that Satan is often permitted to inflict disease on men, and in various ways to vex them. We read, for example,\* that "Satan went forth from the presence," and with the permission, "of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown," the Lord having said, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." We read, too,† that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." The description given of the devil‡ as "having the power of death," seems to imply, not merely that by tempting man to sin he made him fall under the

\* Job ii. 7. † 1 Sam. xvi. 14. ‡ Heb. ii. 14; and Scott, *in locum*.

sentence of disease and death, but also that, "as accuser and executioner, he has some power in inflicting and aggravating these things." Writing to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of delivering an offender to "Satan, for the destruction of the flesh:" and he describes a certain trial, which was sent on himself, as "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him." Several of the maladies which Christ miraculously cured, are ascribed to the agency Satan; and this malady, in particular, or rather the evil spirit who occasioned it, is here designated as "a spirit of infirmity." How far any similar agency may still be exerted, we cannot say; but we have the unerring authority of inspiration for its existence in this and many other cases, and it is a striking illustration of the malice and power of the wicked one. It was another heavy aggravation, too, of the poor woman's malady, and showed its hopeless nature, humanly speaking, that it had been of so long continuance.

You see, however, the commendable desire this woman discovered for the public ordinances of religion; unseemly, and mortifying to human vanity, as her malady was, and difficult and painful as it must have been for her to move, she was not prevented, by false shame, or bodily weakness and suffering, from going to the synagogue. How different the conduct of different persons in this respect! Very slight causes indeed, and even circumstances that present hardly the shadow of an excuse, prevent some people from going to church; while others have such a desire for it, that nothing but absolute inability, or a clear call of mercy, keeps them away. Let not the worldly smile contempt on the zealous strivings of any of God's weak and weary children to reach the habitation of their Father's house which they love so well; nor let any of them cease to come to it, as long as they are at all able. It is a pleasant sight to see an infirm Christian making his way with difficulty to the sanctuary, there to forget all his burdens and griefs, in holding communion with his God and Saviour, and feasting on the blessings of salvation. It is quite true that infirmities often increase to such a degree as completely to incapacitate people from going to the house of God: in such circumstances, to acquiesce in the deprivation, and to seek to God with all diligence at home, must be the duty of those who are detained, while they ought to be remembered and visited, with words and actions of Christian kindness, by those who are able to go about. Surely, however, with a few very parti-



cular exceptions, those who are able to go anywhere else should not doubt of its being their duty to frequent the congregation of the Lord; surely, the place where his honour dwelleth should be the very last place to which they cease to repair. So be it with every one of us that has ever known the grace of God, and seen his beauty in the sanctuary. Here let us be found on all proper occasions, unless prevented by absolute inability, or the calls of mercy.

To this diligent attendance on public ordinances, the success of this afflicted woman must be considered a great encouragement. Luke goes on to say, "*And, when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.*" He saw her, and beholding her, looked on her with an eye of pity. Thus it is said of the widow of Nain, as she was accompanying her son's bier, "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her." And is it not a delightful thought, that the divine Saviour, who sees and knows all things, beholds, with special interest, those who love to be found in his house? Not one of them, however lowly, escapes his notice; but, if out of a multitude, there be one more feeble than the rest, on that object his eye fixes with the deepest sympathy. A pleasing thought it is that we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who can, and does, have compassion on us.

On some occasions, Jesus exerted his power to heal, in consequence of direct applications from the afflicted persons, or their friends; on other occasions, as here, spontaneously, without waiting for any request being made to him. So, it sometimes happens, that mercy is shown to the soul, without any apparent anxiety to obtain either the mercy itself, or the means of it: indeed, the first truly spiritual movement must always be on the part of God. In reference to the calling of the Gentiles, are the words of the Lord, by Isaiah, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." And yet, we must not pervert these illustrations of sovereign grace, to the neglect of seeking earnestly to God in the use of prayer and other means. There is no promise made to those who do not seek the Lord; but there are many promises to those who do seek him. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," saith the Redeemer; and again, "All that the Father giveth me shall

come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." May he graciously inspire us with an earnest longing for salvation, "preventing," that is, anticipating, us "with the blessing of his goodness."

Jesus called the afflicted woman to him, who, of course, (and must it not have been an interesting sight?) infirm, and decrepid, and bent almost to the ground as she was, made the best of her way, with all the little speed she could, through the midst of the people, towards that part of the synagogue where he was. So, when he calls us to come to him, let us, with all the little effort which we can command, forthwith repair to him mentally, and, in believing expectation, stand reverently before his presence, or humbly cast ourselves at his feet. When the woman had come close up to him, he "said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." She, as it is afterwards expressed, was bound by Satan, and now she is loosed. She was just on the point of being delivered from her bondage, and therefore Jesus speaks of her deliverance as already effected.

Having said these words, "*he laid his hands on her.*" This solemn imposition of hands was a mode frequently adopted by him, and was very expressive of virtue, or power, being exerted by him, or going out of him, to heal. Divine power did accompany the words and the manual sign, "*and immediately she was made straight.*" The cure was instantaneous, complete, and permanent. She forthwith stood erect, and walked with as much ease as if nothing had ever ailed her.

It is worthy of remark, that this woman appears to have entered the synagogue, at this time, for her spiritual benefit, and not with any view of a bodily cure; and that, while she was seeking, and, there is every reason to believe, finding the greater blessing, she obtained also the less. In this she should be followed as a pattern by us all. We are taught, in the Lord's Prayer, to pray for the advancement of God's glory, and the coming of his kingdom in ourselves and others, even before we pray for our daily bread; and we have the direction to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," followed up with the promise that, if we do so, all other things necessary will be added unto us.

But, let us not pass from the consideration of this miracle, without viewing it as a *representation of the gracious work of Christ on the soul*. The state of this woman, bound by Satan, infirm and bowed down, gives a striking representa-

tion of the state of all men by nature. They are overcome and kept in bondage by the evil one; their infirmity, their weakness, as to spiritual exertion, is complete; they are without strength and ungodly; their mental powers are distorted; they are bent down to grovel in earthly things; and they can in no wise lift themselves up to set their affections on things above, or to walk upright before the Lord; and this miserable infirmity is both natural to them, and also confirmed and increased by long habit. But, as the Lord Jesus delivered this woman by miraculous power, so does he, by his blood and Spirit, deliver sinners from the dominion of Satan, correct their disordered souls, rectify the obliquity of their depraved wills, raise them from the degradation of guilt and corruption, and enable them to walk, and even to run, in the way of God's commandments. Let poor, weak, and perishing sinners think of this—let them come to Christ at his call, and he will lay the powerful hand of his grace upon them, and save them.

But this miracle may also be viewed as *an illustration of the kindness of the Saviour to afflicted, weak, and contrite disciples*. Some, who love his house and his person, labour under much infirmity of soul, and are greatly depressed in their minds, because of their sins, and various spiritual and temporal trials. Such was the state of the Psalmist's mind, when he said, "I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly: I go mourning all the day long." But, when their Lord calls them to come to him, and enables them to come in the renewed exercise of faith, then he restores to them the joy of his salvation, and upholds them with his free Spirit; and thus, as the Psalmist says, "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down."—"The Lord looseth the prisoners; the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down."—"The Lord lifteth up the meek." Let all the afflicted and contrite, who love his name, think of this: let them trust in him, and they shall find that his grace will be sufficient for them, and that his strength will be made perfect in their weakness. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees."—"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

This great deliverance was received by the woman with suitable feelings, and acknowledged in a suitable manner; she "*glorified God*"—audibly describing, probably, the severity, and, humanly speaking, hopelessness, of her com-

plaint, and the perfection and value of her cure, and ascribing heartfelt praise to the Lord, to whose kindness and power she was so deeply indebted. From her conduct in this respect, as well as from her being found in the synagogue at all, in the midst of such infirmity, we are led to conclude that she received spiritual benefit, as well as bodily relief, at this time, and now, if not before, was led to believe in Christ to the saving of her soul. Her conduct, in thus glorifying God, should remind us of the duty of giving him the praise of every temporal and spiritual deliverance we receive. Whatever means he may employ, the glory is still due to himself of all that is beneficial to us in his ordinary providential and spiritual dealings. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," says he; "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Let us glorify him for such love, in the language of praise, and in a life of obedience, saying, each of us, "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore: for great is thy mercy toward me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."—"Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

Let us now consider how this miracle was received by "*the ruler of the synagogue.*" We had formerly occasion \* to speak of this office in the synagogue, as consisting in a right of directing in its worship and discipline. Sometimes there seem to have been several who bore the title of rulers, one of whom was the principal. Jairus was called "one of the rulers of the synagogue;" and Crispus "the chief ruler of the synagogue."† When Paul and Barnabas were in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, "the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." On the occasion before us, the ruler of the synagogue, instead of being delighted, as he ought to have been, was filled "*with indignation*"—was in a rage, as if a holy anger would burn because Christ had violated the Sabbath in curing the woman. He did not directly attack Christ himself, but he addressed himself, in a very artful and malicious manner, to the people, not only finding fault with them, but insinuating that Jesus could not be a holy person, or a

\* See Lecture xliii. on chap. viii. 40, &c.

† Mark v. 22; Acts xviii. 8.

teacher of true religion, else he would not have profaned the Sabbath. Filled with indignation, he "*answered,*" or spoke out in a way suggested by the existing circumstances (for, this is one of the many places in which the expression does not signify an exact reply to a question put, or to arguments used before), "he answered," "*and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day.*" The ruler here referred to the fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." In referring to this commandment, he referred to what ever did, and ever must, at once command the conscientious reverence of every one that fears the Lord. But here lay the sophistry and the danger of the ruler's mode of arguing—while he laid hold on a principle of mighty weight with the conscience, he totally misapplied it. Something of the same kind is often attempted still, and that not always from hypocrisy, but often from the extreme of sensibility preventing the full scriptural exercise of the understanding. We ought all to be on our guard against this, lest, under the garb of uncommon sanctity, or from a sincere but mistaken view of some Christian doctrine, or precept, any turn us aside from the path of true piety and benevolence.

As for this ruler, the real cause of his indignation was not a regard for the observance of the Sabbath, but a dislike to Christ himself, and to his gospel, in whatever manner, and at whatever time, it might be advanced. The truth was, that the ruler would have been displeased with the people for coming to Christ, and with him for teaching and working miracles, on any day of the week, and laid hold on the circumstance of the miracle being performed on the Sabbath, merely because it furnished the most plausible objection that occurred to him. He would not have wanted something to object, we may be sure, however different the time and circumstances of the miracle might have been.

In the same manner, those who, disliking vital religion itself, are displeased with every instance of its success, always have something to find fault with in the circumstances in which that success is effected, whether there be any thing really objectionable or not. Whereas, for example, this ruler was indignant that a cure was performed

on the body on the Sabbath, some are indignant when any good is done, or endeavoured to be done, to the soul on a week-day, or in any way not exactly according to their own confined ideas; and, instead of rejoicing at the deliverance of a soul from the thralldom of Satan, it is their study and gratification to find some shadow of a reason for throwing discredit on it: and all this they do, protesting that they have a high respect for religion notwithstanding. Let such unworthy feelings and conduct be far from us.

Our Lord openly charged the ruler with hypocrisy, and made a triumphant defence of his own conduct. "*The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each one of you, on the Sabbath, loose his ox, or his ass, from the stall, and lead him away to watering; and ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?*" Though we cannot pass this point without a few observations, it is the less necessary to enlarge on it here, as we had an opportunity of considering our Lord's answer to the same objection in the beginning of the 6th chapter, on the occasion of his disciples plucking and eating the ears of corn, and of his own miracle of healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath-day. The circumstance here mentioned was happily chosen by our Lord for the object he had in view. Such care of cattle was universally taken, and acknowledged to be right even by the most rigid Pharisees.\* But much more was our Lord's conduct agreeable to the law of God in this case. Were irrational animals to be attended to, and was any human being to be neglected? Besides, this was a daughter of Abraham—a Jewess, and probably, not only a descendant of the father of the faithful, but a partaker of the same faith; and therefore, though Christ's regards were not confined, he might have been particularly expected to have pity on her, according to his usual rule, and according to the direction afterwards given by his apostles, that we should be ready to do good to all as we have opportunity, but especially to those who are of the household of faith. She was one, too, whom Satan had bound; so that to inter-

\* Wotton's Miscell. ii. 41; Lightfoot, Hor. Heb. These lines of Virgil naturally occur here, though they are far from being a parallel to the sacred text:—

"Quippe etiam festis quædam exercere diebus  
Fas et jura sinunt:  
Balantumque gregem fluvio mersare salubri."

Georg., l., 268.

fere to set her at liberty, was a work peculiarly befitting Him who was manifested for the very purpose of destroying the works of the devil. Her affliction had already been of very long duration, which was a reason for his not delaying for a single day to relieve her. Besides, while the watering of cattle required considerable time and labour, especially where the water was to draw for them, or where the watering-place was at a distance, this miracle could not be ranked among laborious works, but was performed with a touch, and in a moment.

So triumphant was this defence of our Lord's, that neither the ruler, nor any other person, had the effrontery to attempt any reply to it. "*When he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed; and all the people,*" as they well might, "*rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.*" And so it is often that solid argument and exemplary conduct silence those whom they do not convert. We may rest assured, too, that whoever may misrepresent and oppose the Redeemer, his adversaries shall all be confounded at last, and his triumph shall be complete; for, the gracious things which he did, and said, and suffered, shall be published and believed wider and wider, till his glory fill the earth.

After what has been already said in the way of application to ourselves in going along, one point only needs now to be noticed, and that briefly, namely, *the instruction which this passage furnishes as to the way in which the Sabbath should be observed.* Neither in this, nor in any other part of his conduct, does our Lord give any encouragement to laxity in the observance of the fourth commandment. With the change from the last to the first day of the week, the institution continues in force, and will continue in force while the world lasts. No unnecessary work can innocently be done on it, nor any amusement whatever engaged in. No part of the time can innocently be abstracted from its duties. So far, however, from thinking it necessary to prove at greater length that works of necessity and mercy are not inconsistent with its due observance, we ought rather, at once, to maintain that these works rank among its positive duties. The whole passage shows the hypocrisy, or the folly, of objecting to such works on the ground of a regard to the Sabbath. When such works cannot be attended to without absence from the public worship of God, they are to have the preference; for, in such cases, God himself says,

"I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It is proper, at the same time, to observe, that in many cases of this kind, a part of the Sabbath is all that is required, and that sufficient time remains for attending public worship once, or perhaps twice, as well as for other expressly religious engagements; so that, in such cases, Christians never should, and it is to be hoped never will, make the necessity of partially engaging in works of mercy an excuse for the total neglect of those exercises which are peculiarly appropriate to the Sabbath. We shall best acquit our consciences, and most exactly do what will please and honour God, by attending to these different, though not opposite considerations, with discrimination and faithfulness, according to the circumstances in which we are providentially placed. May we be enabled so to employ ourselves on this sacred day, that the blessing promised to those who keep it aright may descend on us. Thus saith the Lord, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for, the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."



## LECTURE LXXIV.

LUKE XIII. 18-21.

"Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? 19. It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. 20. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? 21. It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

A CERTAIN author begins his History of the Roman Empire with the remark that hardly any was greater in its increase, or smaller in its origin: and, doubtless, that might well be said of an empire, which, commencing with a few stragglers, increased in population, territories, power, and conquests, till it had no rival. But it is found, in almost every department, that great things are usually small in their commencement. The waving corn of the fruitful field, when it first looks out from under the ground, is as small as needles: and the largest oak in the forest was once an acorn. The mighty mound, and the stately palace, began in a single movement of the spade, or a single stroke of the hammer. The time was when there existed but one house where now flourishes the first city of the world. Look at the new-born babe, diminutive, weak, ignorant, and helpless: but it grows and waxes strong in body and mind, till it reach the maturity of manhood, and then there is nothing to be seen half so noble. Those operations in manufactures and commerce were at first very limited, unskilful, and timid, which have now become so extensive, dexterous, and daring. What were the performances in the fine arts, at first, but rude attempts? and what was the light of the sciences but a glimmering taper?

A similar progression is seen in things relating to the kingdom of God. In these, the Almighty could have produced great results instantaneously, and ushered forward plans in a state of high advancement from the very first; but he has preferred the method of gradual development.

Though we cannot pretend to know all the reasons for the mode he follows, this one thing is obvious, that it is much better suited than instantaneous, or even very rapid advancement, to the limited faculties and moral improvement of man. In this way, greater scope is given for exercising men's minds; and time is allowed them for patient observation, that they may discover and admire the wonderfully nice and connected train of his procedure. Had this work been presented to them complete at once, unless they had been endowed with superhuman powers, it would have baffled their utmost endeavours to have formed anything like an adequate conception of it; whereas, by being enabled to examine it in its different stages of progress, they can form as correct an idea of the whole of it as is necessary.

The people who were chosen from among all the nations of the earth to hold the deposit of the truth, and to prepare the way for the coming of Messiah, who was to arise from the midst of them, were very small in their origin, but very great in their increase. The Lord called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, declaring to him that he would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven. Accordingly, his posterity, a mere handful when they came down into Egypt, "multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them;" whence God brought them out triumphantly, a very great nation. In like manner, the kingdom of God, spoken of in this passage—that is, the reign of God in the gospel on earth—is described as very small in its origin, but very great and rapid in its increase. Now, these are the leading ideas taught, both in the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, and in the parable of the leaven. In both these parables the kingdom of God may just be considered as signifying Christianity—Christianity in the world, and Christianity in the heart.

"*Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?*" said our Lord. "*It is like a grain of mustard-seed.*" The same parable is recorded by Matthew\* and Mark.† According to Matthew, our Lord added, of the mustard-seed, "Which indeed is the least of all seeds;"—according to Mark, "Which is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:" that is, which is a very small seed, and perhaps the smallest which grows to such a size, and assumes the appearance, and something of the texture, of a tree. Jesus elsewhere said to his disciples, "If ye have

\* Matt. xiii. 31.

† Mark iv. 30.

faith as a grain of mustard-seed;" that is, if ye have faith in the least degree. Thus it appears that to say that any thing was like a grain of mustard-seed, was a proverbial expression to denote its smallness. Now, in order to perceive the propriety with which the gospel kingdom was compared to this very small seed, it is only necessary to reflect for a moment on the small number of those who, at first, embraced and advocated it, and their lowly condition, in a worldly point of view. They were but a handful: and they were not only few, but lowly, unlearned, poor, and despised. Was not Jesus the carpenter's son? was not his mother called Mary? His first disciples were of the lower classes of society, and had to labour for their daily bread. Then especially, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called." Or, if any of them were of a higher station in life, and men of learning, they did not look to such circumstances for success: their "preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom," nor with "excellency of speech;" for, they "determined not to know any thing among men, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The gospel, then, was well compared to a seed, which is indeed the least of all seeds.

It is said of this seed, that "*a man took it, and cast it into,*" or sowed it in, "*his garden.*" This may be understood in the same sense in which our Lord expounds part of the parable of the tares. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom:" or, the seed may here mean the word. Next to our Lord himself, the chief sowers of the seed were the apostles. "The great salvation first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterwards confirmed by them that heard him." The apostles, like their Master, confined their preaching, for some time, to the Jews; but they afterwards turned to the Gentiles. They made great efforts in travelling and preaching, so that the gospel was soon published throughout the greater part of the then known world. Thus, the seed was sown.

It is added, "*and it grew, and waxed a great tree, and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.*" It is well known, that, considering the smallness of the seed, the growth of the mustard plant is great and rapid even with us; but it is certain that its growth is much more extraordinary in some countries where the soil is richer, and the climate warmer, and that there it sometimes reaches such a

size as to assume the appearance of a tree rather than an herb. The following extract is taken from the Jerusalem Talmud: "There was a stalk of mustard in Sichin, from which sprang out three boughs, one of which, being broken off, served to cover the tent of a potter, and produced three cabs of mustard-seed. Rabbi Simeon ben Chalapha said, A stalk of mustard-seed was in my field, into which I was wont to climb as men do into a fig tree." It is plain, that though these rabbinical accounts may be exaggerated, they would not have been given, even in the Talmud, if it had not been usual for this plant to grow to a very large size. "Some soils being more luxuriant than ours, and the climate much warmer, raise the same plant to a size and perfection far beyond what a poorer soil, or a colder climate, can possibly do. Herodotus says he had seen wheat and barley in the country about Babylon, which carried a blade full four fingers' breadth: and that the millet and *sesamum* grew to an incredible size. These facts, and several others which might be added, confirm fully the possibility of what our Lord says of the mustard tree, however incredible such things may at first appear to those who are acquainted only with the productions of northern regions and cold climates."\*

Now, to perceive how the increase of Christianity *in the world* may be justly compared to this amazing growth of the mustard-seed, it is necessary to take a view of the history of Christianity during its first ages. And here, three sources of information present themselves, namely, the Word of God, the writings of uninspired early Christians, and the testimony of unbelievers and declared enemies of Christianity.

When we examine *the Word of God*, we find, as already noticed, that notwithstanding all our Lord's preaching and miracles, very few believed on him at first. Though he plainly taught that the kingdom of God was in the midst of them, few submitted to it: though he showed them the glory of his kingdom, and the liberties and privileges of those who should become his subjects, the people, in general, said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." When he came unto his own, his own received him not. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; they hid, as it were, their faces from him: he was despised, and they esteemed him not." Nay, they crucified the Lord of glory. Then, doubtless, they were ready to suppose that his pretensions were at an end,

\* Dr A. Clarke on Matt. xiii. 31, and Whitby and Buxtorf.

and his kingdom overthrown. They imagined that, though he had sown the seed, it was buried so deep, that it would never break the ground. Vain thought! Their attempts to keep it down proved the means of making it take deeper root, and consequently, of its sending forth a stock and branches of such size and strength as withstood the most violent storms of persecution. After our Lord's resurrection, his appearing to many of his disciples inspired them with fresh courage to stand forward and assert the rights of his kingdom. The day of Pentecost, on which the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost was poured out on the disciples, presented a noble opportunity for the spread of the gospel, and was signalized by its great success. "There were then dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven."—"Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." When they were gathered together, to hear the gospel preached in their own languages, many of them were converted. On that one day, there were added to the Church about three thousand souls. The converted strangers would, on their return to their own countries, disseminate the knowledge of Jesus, and contribute greatly to the multiplying of his subjects. We read, also, in the Acts of the Apostles,\* that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved," and that "the Churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily." It appears, from the same source, that the gospel was advanced by the very means which were adopted with the view of crushing it; for, "they that were scattered abroad" by persecution, "went every where preaching the word." The inspired Epistles, too, furnish satisfactory evidence that a great number of flourishing Churches existed, in different parts of the world, at a very early period. Thus, that the spread of the gospel, like the growth of the mustard-seed, was both very extensive and very rapid, appears from Scripture.

A second source of information on this subject is furnished by the *uninspired writings of the early Christians*. Of these the most remarkable to the point are Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Arnobius. The words of two of these four may be quoted. Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with

\* Acts ii. 47, xvi. 5, viii. 4.

Trypho, the Jew, which was written about the year of our Lord 146, has these words: "There is no nation, whether of Barbarians, or Greeks, or any others, by whatsoever names they are called, whether they live in waggons, or without houses, or in tents, among whom prayers are not made, and thanksgivings offered up to the Father and Creator of all, through the name of the crucified Jesus." Tertullian, in his Apology, or Defence of Christianity, written in the year 200, thus describes the progress which Christianity had then made: "We are but of yesterday," says he, in addressing himself to the heathen, "nevertheless, we have filled every thing belonging to you: cities, islands, villages, free boroughs, assembling places, the armies themselves, the wards, the rolls of judges, the palace, the senate: we leave you nothing but the temples."

But, lest it should be suspected that the friends of Christianity represent its progress as much more rapid and extensive than it really was, we observe that there is still a third source of information on this subject—the testimony of *unbelievers and enemies*. Tacitus, in his account of the persecution of the Christians raised by Nero, in the year of our Lord 65, says that there was "a vast multitude of them put to death." Now, if those of them who were put to death constituted "a vast multitude," surely, the total number of Christians must have been very great. Lucian, the Syrian philosopher, Porphyry, Lampridius, and several others, might be quoted; but the most remarkable testimony of this kind is that of the younger Pliny, in his celebrated letter to the Emperor Trajan, which was written only about sixty-six years after our Lord's ascension. "It seems to me," says Pliny, "a matter worthy of deliberation, chiefly because of the number of those who are in danger. For, many of all ages, of every rank, and of both sexes also, are called to account, and will be called. Neither through the cities only, but through the villages also, and the country, is the contagion of that superstition spread"—for so he opprobriously speaks of Christianity. Thus, the enemies of the gospel themselves confirm the testimony of its friends.

At the succession of Constantine to the imperial throne, the gospel became openly triumphant; and it is said, by those best acquainted with the history of those times, that the candidates for the dignity of emperor were successful or unsuccessful, according as they favoured or opposed the Christians. Thus, the progress of the gospel, in the first ages, was well

foretold, figuratively, by our Lord in this parable, as the growth of the mustard-seed is not only great, but rapid.

Since these first ages, Christianity has had various success at different times. It is again beginning to spread itself; and the time is coming when this prophetic parable shall receive a far more extensive, even a complete accomplishment. Nations shall be born at once; and the Ancient of Days shall give to the Son of man dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, may serve him.

But we observed that this parable may be considered as descriptive of *the progress of Christianity in the heart*, as well as in the world. It is a most apt representation of the progress of true religion in the soul of every individual Christian. The degree of knowledge and right feeling, of faith and love, in the soul, at first, is very small; but it increases more or less rapidly.\* The seed of divine truth, sown in the heart, is watered by the influences of the Spirit through the medium of ordinances, and warmed and cherished by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, till it springs up, and becomes like a large tree. The righteous holds on his way; and he that hath clean hands becomes stronger and stronger. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither." The Lord himself promises to nourish the believer, and to render him a blessing to those who come under his protection. "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

The parable of the "*leaven*" being (as we already noticed) much the same in its design with that of the mustard-seed, does not require any very full exposition, as distinct from it. Our Lord, by setting forth the same truth in different lights, and under different comparisons, evidences his anxiety that we should be well aware of its nature, certainty, and importance. This parable is founded on a well known

\* The effects of a moral address are compared, by Seneca (Epistle xxxviii.) to the growth of seed: "Seminis modo, quod, quamvis sit exiguum, cum occupavit idoneum locum, vires suas explicat, et ex minimo in maximos auctus diffundatur. Idem facit oratio."

operation in common life. The gospel at first was, like leaven, "*hid in three measures\* of meal.*" It was hid, as, before it operated in any very obvious way, it lay concealed for some time in the lump, or mass of the world. Nevertheless, it exerted its gradual and sure influence, till it diffused itself to a great extent; and it will continue to work, till it diffuse itself through the whole mass of mankind.

But this parable, too, is to be also viewed as descriptive of the progress of Christianity, of true religion, in the heart of the individual. And here we may observe, that like the working of leaven hid in meal, the working of the gospel in the heart is *secret*. The effect, indeed, of leaven is obvious; but the manner and actual working are invisible, and not altogether understood. So, the outward effects of the gospel are seen in the life; but its inward workings, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, are secret and mysterious. This is taught, under a different figure, when it is said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Again, the gospel, like leaven, is *assimilating*. Without altering the substance of the meal, the leaven changes its qualities, so as to bring it to resemble itself. In like manner, without changing the identity of the soul, the gospel communicates to it a new life and a new character, corresponding to its own holy and heavenly nature, and changes it into the image of God, from one degree of glory to another, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. And then, the *universality* of the influence of the gospel is pointed out by the circumstance that the leaven ceases not to work till it has leavened the whole lump. The gospel is not partial, but universal, in its operation on the individual; for, though not perfectly as to the degree, yet universally as to the different essential points, his whole character is affected. In the new creature, "all things are become new." He is "renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness."† And this process of assimilation is carried on, till the likeness becomes perfect, and the transformation complete. The very God of peace sanctifies believers wholly; and their whole spirit, and soul, and body are pre-

\* *Τρια σαρα*. Three of these measures were equal to one ephah, a measure of things dry, corresponding to the bath, a measure of liquids.

† Shorter Catechism.



served blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, in the way of a more direct improvement of this passage, we observe, in the first place, *that the way in which these parabolical prophecies of the spread of the gospel have already been fulfilled is a proof of its divinity.* Various defenders of the Christian faith have written much, and well, on this point; and they have generally reckoned it of such importance, as to treat it as a distinct branch of the evidence of Christianity. Nor does it require many words to state the outline of their argument. The difficulties with which Christianity had, at first, to contend, were very numerous, and apparently insurmountable. It had to overcome the prejudices of false religions, which, however absurd, had a very firm hold on the minds of their votaries. It was introduced, not in an age of ignorance and barbarism, but at a most enlightened period of the world: so that it had many learned men to oppose it in its infancy. It had to contend with the malice and wit of philosophers, and with the power of princes. The embracing of it was not accompanied with any worldly advantage, but, on the contrary, exposed to the loss of goods, to contumely, to the desertion of friends, to the rage of enemies, to all the minor degrees of persecution, and, in many cases, to death in its most appalling forms. Yet, notwithstanding all these difficulties, it spread, and rapidly spread, through a great part of the world. Now, when we consider the very small, and, humanly speaking, very unpromising beginning, this result is not only extraordinary, but altogether unaccountable on any common principle. Here was no employment of force, or of worldly inducement; but rather, here were weakness and discouragement: and yet the triumph was splendid. The authors of this amazing revolution of sentiment in the world, were a few illiterate, despised, and persecuted men, apparently altogether unequal to the task. Surely, if this scheme had been of men, it would have come to nought, or, at all events, could never have succeeded in this manner. No cause can be assigned in any degree adequate to the effect, except that the preaching of the gospel was indeed confirmed by miracles, and accompanied with the influences of the Holy Ghost. But, then, the whole evangelical history is true, and Christianity is of God.

Or, if we consider the parables as descriptive of the pro-

gress of the gospel in the heart of the individual, we are still led to the same conclusion. The origin and progress of religion in his own soul, are satisfactory evidence, to the believer, of the truth of the gospel. "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." The assimilating influence of this leaven, that is, of holy, Christian doctrine, proves it to be of God's inspiration, and accompanied with God's power. Some of the heathen philosophers endeavoured to sow what they considered the seed of virtue in the minds of men; not being of the right kind, however, and not being sown in improved ground, it came to nothing. But, when the gospel is blessed of God, it is thereby proved to be from God. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God who giveth the increase."

Secondly, These parables *open up delightful views of the future history of the Church, and furnish us with a call and an encouragement to exert ourselves for the universal diffusion of the gospel.* As already observed, these and similar prophetic passages must be considered as having yet obtained only a partial accomplishment: but from what is already fulfilled of them, we may rest assured of the fulfilment of what remains. Let not the many, and apparently insurmountable, difficulties in the way of the introduction of the gospel into some countries, damp our hope; for, it has already overcome as great difficulties as ever it can have to contend with again. Let us rejoice, then, in the assurance of its universal extension. Of the ultimate size, beauty, and value of this noble tree of the kingdom of God, the tree of Nebuchadnezzar's vision may be considered a more exact emblem than it was even of himself for whom it was intended:—"I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew and was strong; and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof was much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it." Or, according to the other comparison, it is delightful to think, that, whatever deadening influence may interpose, the leaven of Christian doctrine, now thrown into society, will continue to work, till it diffuse itself through the whole mass of the human race. But there are here, also, a call and an

encouragement to duty. We are bound and accustomed to pray for this happy consummation, saying, "Thy kingdom come:" and let us remember that we are also bound and encouraged to employ, for this end, and as far as may be in our power, all those outward means through which the Spirit of God may be expected to work, for bringing our fellow-creatures of every nation to the obedience of faith.

Lastly, *See to it that these prophetic parables be receiving a fulfilment in you.* They are illustrative of the kingdom of God, of the prevalence of true religion; inquire, then, if that kingdom be within you. Is the seed of divine truth sown in your hearts at all, and springing up in your character at all? Is the root of grace in your souls? If it be not, seek that it may be implanted in you, that you may not remain unfruitful. If it be, look up to heaven for the dew, and the rain, and the sunshine of divine influence, that it may increase more and more.

Consider, according to the other parable, whether the leaven of Christian doctrine be at all in your hearts. It will work, if it be there. The truth will excite some commotion, if it have reached your consciences. Nay, it will not only move you, but renew and transform you. There must be a leaven of some kind working within you; but, beware lest it be a bad and corrupting leaven—that is, false doctrine or bad principle. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Beware of the "leaven of malice and wickedness." "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." "Hide God's commandments with you," that you may say, as did David, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord; teach me thy statutes."

And whereas both these parables suppose small beginnings, and afterwards great progress in religion, let none of you be disheartened who have grace even in the lowest degree; but let every one of you be encouraged to press forward to greater attainments. Do consider that salvation is, of all things, by far the most important in itself, and, therefore, that it ought to be, of all things, by far the most interesting to you. The God whose you are, and whom you serve, is surely well deserving of your whole heart; the Saviour, on whom you rely, is surely well deserving of your undivided and unhesitating trust; and a heaven of perfect holiness, and endless felicity, is surely well deserving of your most intense pursuit. Be not, therefore, satisfied

with small progress in a concern of such moment. Look around you, and learn wisdom from the children of this generation. See what study, and toil, and life, and bustle, and dread of failure, and anxiety for success are there: body and soul—eyes, ears, hands, feet, heads, hearts—all are busy, and yet all for what is sublunary and perishing. Will you, then, become sluggish in prosecuting what is heavenly and eternal? Will you be contented with poor attainments and feeble exertions in such a field as this? Will you not rather awake and arise, and exert yourselves to the utmost? and will you not importune your God never to allow you to desist, or relax, till you finally and completely prevail, and have an entrance ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ?

## LECTURE LXXV.

LUKE XIII. 22-30.

"And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. 25. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. 28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. 29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. 30. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

LUKE here represents all that we have been reading of from the 51st verse of the 9th chapter, as having taken place during our Lord's journey from Galilee, "*through the cities and villages towards Jerusalem:*" and this seems to have been his last journey thither before his death, as we do not read of his returning to Galilee again till after his resurrection. He performed this journey slowly, making a circuit of the country, and preaching in the cities and villages. During some part of his progress on this occasion, and, probably, while he was actually teaching, "*one said unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?*" We are not expressly told what was the motive which induced the person to put this question. It may have been put in a hostile and captious spirit; but, from the way in which it was received, it is probable that it was put chiefly from curiosity. However this may have been, it was wise and gracious in Christ to avoid giving any direct answer. If it was put by an enemy, a direct answer, of whatever kind, would have been laid hold of as a ground of objection to the Saviour. Had he said that few would be saved, he would have been repre-

sented as uncharitable—had he said that many would be saved, he would have been called lax. If the question was put by one who had a respect for Christ, as seems to have been the case from the way in which he addressed him, but who was more curious about others, than concerned about himself, he would have been satisfied with a direct answer, and would have given himself no more concern about the matter. If, however, he was in earnest about his own salvation, as well as influenced by curiosity, a direct answer might have proved very hurtful to him; for, if he had been told, without explanation, that there would be but few saved, he might have been driven to despair; whereas, if he had been told that there would be many saved, he might have become too easy about his own case, and might have concluded that all would be well with him at last, without any good ground.

It cannot be inconsistent with the spirit of this passage to say, in conformity with other parts of Scripture, that the saved, in one sense, will be many, and in another sense will be few. In one sense, they will be many; for, our Lord has just been comparing the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard-seed, and to the leaven; and he tells us, in this very passage, that converts shall come from every quarter of the world, to sit down in the kingdom of God. We are told, too, elsewhere, that the redeemed will at last form a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. And yet, in perfect consistence with this, the saved will be, in another sense, few; that is, they will be few, at particular times, in many places, in comparison of those who reject the gospel and perish. This was true of the generation then living, and of many other generations. This answer, in this particular view, our Lord himself gives here, when he says that "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." And still more plainly, he said, in the sermon on the mount, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Each of these views is correct, and useful, when rightly improved: but our Lord knew the temper of the inquirer and of the listeners at the time, and neither to the one view, nor to the other, would he so direct their attention, as to divert their serious thoughts from

themselves. Instead of that, he answered so as to withdraw them from speculation to practice. And this was the method which he dexterously followed on other similar occasions. Thus, as we read towards the end of the Gospel of John, when Peter, desirous to know what was to be the future history of John, said to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Jesus replied, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." And when the disciples asked him, saying (as we read in the 1st chapter of the Acts), "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times, or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Declining to give any precise answer to this question, our Lord "*said unto them,*" that is, not only to the inquirer, but to all who were present, "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate.*" Let us mark well this weighty exhortation. What is here called a "strait gate," seems to signify literally a wicket, that is, a little gate, in, or connected with, a large one. We still frequently see gates of this construction. When a crowd comes to a gate, on any very interesting occasion, such as that of a great public entertainment, it is wished, of course, to admit only those who are fit, and have a right to enter, and to shut out all improper characters, and those who have no right: and, with this view, it is usual, instead of throwing open the large gate, to open only the wicket; improper persons are prevented, by those who keep the wicket, from entering, while those who are invited and get admittance, have to force their way with difficulty through the crowd. The strait gate is here put, figuratively, for the entrance, or introduction, into a state of salvation, and of course, into heaven. By this gate we are exhorted to strive, literally to agonize, to wrestle, to struggle, to enter in; as men will do in making their way through a crowd, and in overcoming every obstacle, in such a case as we have just supposed. In a word, this exhortation implies that there are great difficulties in the way of our salvation, which must be resolutely encountered and actually overcome. In entering on the consideration of these difficulties and necessary exertions, it is proper to premise that no exertions of ours could have any effect in working out our

salvation in the meritorious sense, and that there are no difficulties of that kind in the way. Every obstacle of that nature is removed out of the way by the perfect work of Christ, and there is no difficulty in entering in except what, in some way, originates or finds encouragement, from ourselves. Heaven is already the "purchased possession:" all the price of admission which will ever be required, is already paid. We must, therefore, here, as in every other case, discard every idea of a self-righteous nature—every idea of striving with a view to add to the finished work of the Redeemer. Still, however, in perfect consistence with this blessed truth, there is a necessity for our obtaining an introduction into a state of salvation, and for our following after its consummation, in the prescribed way. There is, in the very nature of things, a necessity for our being personally and earnestly engaged in this concern both in thought and in pursuit. That difficulties of various kinds lie in our way, which require, under God, strong exertions in us to overcome them, appears, as from this exhortation to "strive," so from such other scriptural expressions as these: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force:"—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:"—"Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should seem to come short:"—"If the righteous scarcely be saved." The same idea is implied in the words fighting, running, and labouring. Let us consider, somewhat more particularly, whence these difficulties arise, that we may be aware of them, and prepared to meet them.

They arise, first, *from our own natural state*. One difficulty consists in our *ignorance*. We have naturally no knowledge at all of the way to heaven: and even when the way is pointed out by revelation, we perceive it not. We are described as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our heart." This ignorance, while it continues, is an insurmountable barrier in our way to salvation; and its removal requires our own striving, our own close mental application, as well as the light of Scripture, and the aid of the Holy Spirit. *Unbelief* presents another difficulty to our entering in at the strait gate. "So we see," writes the apostle to the Hebrews, "that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Our pride, prejudice, and distrust of God, are great obstacles to that faith without



which it is impossible to please him: and therefore, however difficult it may be, they must be resisted and borne down. And then, there is an *aversion from good*, and there is a *propensity to evil*, which are predominant in the unrenewed, and which remain in some degree, and cause much contention, and render great wrestlings necessary, to the renewed. Believers have a law in their members warring against the law in their mind, to bring them into captivity to the law of sin. They must, therefore, "strive for the mastery" over the evil principle. What an obstacle is presented by undue attachment to the world! It tends to make us willing to remain where we are, rather than to exert ourselves to make our escape. Long habit, too, superinduced on evil propensity, greatly increases the difficulty to some. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Add to this our own weakness, nay, our complete moral inability. "The carnal mind"—"is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be:" nor are believers sufficient for any thing, as of themselves. This inability, however, does not do away the need, or utility, of our own personal attention to the things which belong to our peace: on the contrary, it should lead us to look to God for his regenerating grace, and to exert our mental faculties, in hope of the communication of strength from on high.

But, secondly, there are difficulties connected with *the nature of a religious life*, which require us to strive in personal exertion. The duties of such a life constitute, of themselves, a great and difficult work of many parts. It is difficult for us to cease to trust in ourselves, and to have full confidence in God, and to cast ourselves on his free grace, through faith in the righteousness of his Son. The duty of repentance, of rending the heart, of becoming broken and contrite in spirit, is a painful duty. Mortification of sinful desires, is a duty which requires much attention. To cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye, when they offend, or hurt us, to mortify our members which are upon the earth, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, is a work of no easy accomplishment. We are called, also, to the difficult duty of self-denial, to be denied to our own sinful inclinations, to our own righteousness, to our own wisdom, to our own will, and to our own ease and comfort, if duty calls. "If any man will come after me," says Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross

and follow me." And then, to cultivate the true Christian character in all its branches, such as, dependence on providence, fervent devotion, non-conformity to the world, love to God and man, gratitude, joy, and constant aiming after perfection in holiness—surely this is a business that requires much attention and labour.

Nor let us forget, thirdly, the opposition of *enemies*, who endeavour to prevent us from entering in, and render the gate still more strait, and of still more difficult entry, than it would otherwise be. We are opposed by *Satan*, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. With him we have to wrestle; and hence, we must be sober, vigilant, and active, and resist him steadfast in the faith. The *world*, too, opposes our entrance by the strait gate. It opposes us by its allurements and its terrors. Ungodly and careless men, and those who, though they make some general and vague profession of a regard to religion, are strangers and enemies to true vital godliness—are like those opposers of old, to whom our Lord said,\* "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." When these external enemies meet the internal, namely, our own evil dispositions, which draw away and entice us, and war against our souls, the difficulty of making good our entrance at the strait gate is very great, and can only be surmounted by strenuous efforts. In such efforts we must strive, and strive, too, evangelically; for, "this is the victory that overcometh the world" and every other enemy, "even our faith."

But we have dwelt long enough on the exhortation, let us proceed to consider *the reason by which it is enforced*. "*For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*" These words might, perhaps, at first, convey the idea of a discouragement, rather than of an encouragement, to comply with the foregoing exhortation, and might be so misunderstood as to lead one who was beginning to seek to enter in, to say, "Many others, it appears, are disappointed, and why may not I? I will therefore desist." But, though addressed chiefly to our fears, this is a strong argument in favour of exertion. To suppose that it means that any who seek sincerely, and earnestly, in the right way, and in proper time, to enter in to life, shall fail, is to

\* Matt. xxiii. 13.

forget the general object of this passage itself, and to contradict the express language of other Scriptures. "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Why is it, then, that many who seek to enter in are not able? The reasons are sufficiently plain, and it would be well for us all to ponder them seriously.

In the first place, many seek to enter in, and yet are not able, because they seek *faintly*. They are not open despisers of religion; they pay some slight attention to it, but they are not thoroughly in earnest about it. They come to the gate, as if they wished to enter, but they do not *strive* to enter. We have already seen the necessity of exertion in this matter; but such persons make none, how then can they succeed? Is it to be supposed that the precious blessings of salvation will be bestowed on those who evidently think lightly of them, seeing they are at less pains to secure them, than to obtain a trifle of worldly gain? Shall the crown of glory that fadeth not away be conferred on those who think it not worth a struggle? Shall heaven, with all its blessedness, be theirs, whose conduct proves that they entertain most mean thoughts of it? Most certainly it never will. Let us, then, strive earnestly in this pursuit. Let us fight the good fight of faith, that we may lay hold on eternal life. Let us "set our heart and our soul to seek the Lord our God," knowing that we shall find him, when we seek him with all our heart.

But, secondly, many seek to enter in, and are not able, because they seek in *the wrong way*. Of these, some err entirely as to the way in which they seek justification; and therefore, they cannot get into a state of acceptance with God here, nor into his presence hereafter. They do not seek in the way of faith in the righteousness of Christ. "I am the door," says he; "but they seek to climb up some other way."—"I am the way, and no man cometh to the Father but by me." Men may be very earnest, and yet they must entirely fail if they do not seek to enter in this way. In the language of Paul,\* "Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law." Let us remember this, and seek admission for the sake of the Redeemer. In like manner, all will be denied entrance

\* Rom. ix. 31.

into heaven, who seek it without that holy character which is necessary. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."—"There shall in no wise enter into heaven any thing that defileth." Let us all think of this, and prepare accordingly. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right," power, or privilege, "to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." We must remember, therefore, that it is not enough to be busily, and even deeply concerned about salvation in any way, but that we must seek it the right way. We may ask, but we must not expect to receive, if we ask amiss. We may strive, but we shall strive in vain, if we do not strive according to divine direction. "If a man strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned except he strive lawfully."

Once more here, many seek to enter in, and are not able, because they seek *too late*. This seems the cause of failure more immediately pointed to by our Lord, for he adds, in the 25th verse, "*When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.*" Not only is the gate of entrance into salvation strait, or narrow, but, if men do not enter by it before a certain time, that is, before they die, it will be shut against them altogether. In this parable, the Master of the house signifies Christ himself, who is declared to be the Lord of heaven; and the whole is a striking figurative representation of his resolution to exclude unbelievers from his presence, and of the disappointment and dismay which will overwhelm those who at last find themselves so excluded. Thus, when Noah and his family had entered into the ark, the Lord shut them in; to secure them, and to prevent the entrance of the ungodly race, who, having so long resisted the calls to repentance, were at length left to perish. Much the same ideas with those in the passage before us, are suggested in the parable of the ten virgins,\* "When the bridegroom came, they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Those who die in sin, and have heaven's gate shut against them, discover their folly when it is too late. They would fain retrieve the consequences of their misconduct, but it is impossible.

\* Matt. xxv. 10.

Gladly would they cast in their lot with those whom they formerly disliked and despised, but it cannot be. It is in vain that they call the Master of the house, "Lord, Lord," when they did not the things which he said. He shall say to them, "I know you not whence ye are."\* He who knoweth all things cannot be ignorant of any part of their history. The word "know," is here used in the particular sense of knowing with a knowledge of approbation, and so as to acknowledge them as his friends. Thus, the Psalmist says, "I will not know a wicked person;" and of the Lord it is said, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous;" "He hath respect unto the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off; the Lord knoweth them that are his:" and, "If any man love God, the same is known of him."

Verse 26: "*Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.*" These things were literally true of many in the days of Christ's tabernacling on earth. Many were honoured by being in company with him at table, and still more were miraculously fed by him, and enjoyed the benefit of his public teaching in their cities and villages. These privileges they are here represented as pleading, by way of argument for their admission into heaven; and yet their abuse of them was a great aggravation of their guilt, and the strongest reason for their exclusion. The nature of a parable does not warrant us to infer that any thing exactly similar to the master rising and shutting the door, and the excluded holding the dialogue with him, will literally take place; but the general meaning of the whole is obvious; and, in the plea which the impenitent are here represented as putting in, we have a very instructive specimen and exposure of the false grounds on which many unconverted persons flatter themselves that they will be admitted into heaven at last. Thus, some of them, doubtless, flatter themselves that they are Christians, and will be acknowledged as such by Christ at the great day, because they have eaten and drunk, as it were, in his presence, at the Lord's supper: whereas, they were "eating and drinking condemnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body." Others, again, are ready to flatter themselves that all will be well with them, because of their having enjoyed the best opportunities of being taught from

\* Οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς ποθεν ἔσσεσθαι, seems to be for Οὐκ οἶδα ποθεν ὑμεῖς ἔσσεσθαι. So, in Herodotus, lib. iv., Οὐ Διούην εἰδοῦς ὅπου γῆς εἴη, Non noverant ubi terrarum Libya esset.

the Word, and by the faithful ministers of Christ, and because of the profession of religion they have made; forgetting that privileges abused are guilt incurred, and professions insincere are solemn mockery. No pleas of this kind will be sustained. "What wilt thou say," asks Jeremiah, "when he shall punish thee?" and each of us will do well to ask of himself, with Job, "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and, when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

After the door is shut, sinners may knock and plead as they may, but it will be too late. To all their entreaties the Master of the house will reply as at first. They may knock and cry, "*But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are:*" and he will even add the awful words, "*Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*" It is the will of Christ that his people should be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory. Among the various descriptions of their state, it is said, "So shall they ever be with the Lord." The presence of Christ, or the being with Christ, is one of the chief sources of happiness in heaven. So, on the other hand, absence from the Lord is one of the principal ingredients in the misery of the damned. They "that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." In the account of the judgment, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, we read that the Judge shall say unto them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The reason of their exclusion and banishment is declared to be, that they are "workers of iniquity"—given up to the love and practice of sin, on account of which the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.

"*There,*" or in that place, "*shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,*" or, extreme anguish, "*when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*" By all the prophets in the kingdom of God, we are to understand all the believing and holy prophets, and these only; for these are the words of our Lord himself, "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." But this implies that, generally speaking,

the prophets were holy men, and got to heaven. As for the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their salvation is here and elsewhere positively asserted. From this, too, it is sufficiently plain, not merely that the happiness of the saints in heaven will arise, in part, from their society with each other, but that particular saints will be known to each other, and known not as so many beings without reference to what they were before, and exactly like each other, but as the same persons they were before—known by the distinctive characteristics which marked them below, though freed from all imperfection. What an inexhaustible source of instructive and delightful communication must this supply? We are here told, however, on the other hand, that the admission into heaven, and consequent happiness of the saints, which will be actually seen by the wicked at the last day, and which will be habitually present to their thoughts, will be a heavy aggravation of their misery, in the way of contrast with their own painful exclusion. So, in that other parable, the torment of the rich man was increased when he “saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” The “horn” of the good man “shall be exalted with honour,” says the Psalmist,\* “the wicked shall see it and be grieved, he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish.” The representation of the excluded sinners as “weeping and gnashing their teeth,” is very awful, and must operate, through the fears of every reasonable and thoughtful man, as a powerful inducement to flee from the coming wrath, and to strive to enter in at the strait gate.

*“And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.”* Let not the ungodly and careless imagine, that because they were refused admittance, heaven will be destitute of inhabitants. Let them not assume consequence to themselves, as if their multitude being absent heaven would be empty, and the Lord of glory want a sufficient number of adoring and happy attendants. There are many mansions in his Father’s house, and they shall be all filled. “He will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” This is ever fulfilling, and will, in due time, receive a still more glorious accomplishment; and, though the sight, or the thought of

\* Ps. cxii. 10.

this, may fill his enemies with grief and envy, it refreshes and delights the souls of his friends.

Let us not overlook, however, what our Lord subjoins, "*And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*" Neither the admission, nor the exclusion, shall always correspond with what first appearances might lead men to suppose; for, some, who seemed to bid fair, shall be shut out, while others, who were once very unpromising, shall enter; and, comparing believers with one another, the degree of glory to which they shall be advanced shall be, in some cases, different from what former circumstances seemed to indicate. Our Lord, in this saying, which he uttered on several occasions, seems to have referred more immediately to the rejection of the gospel by the great body of the Jews, who were first in point of privileges, and to its reception by many of the Gentiles, who were last in point of privileges. In the case of the Roman centurion,\* Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." The words, however, admit of a much more general application. It might be shown, at great length, how these words shall hold true—how there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last, in respect of mental endowments—in respect of worldly prosperity—in respect of religious privileges—in respect of external decency—in respect of profession, and in respect of the time of their being effectually called. But we must be contented with the mere enunciation of these particulars, which, indeed, is enough of itself to open up a wide field of profitable meditation.

Briefly, in *conclusion*, let us learn, from our Lord's conduct on this occasion, to give such a turn to speculative questions, when they are started, as may tend to edification.

Let us mark the authority of this passage in favour of strictness in religion. There is, indeed, a spurious strictness about trifles, which neglects the weightier matters of the law, and which is worthless; but there is a proper and commendable strictness in adhering faithfully to all the duties of religion, which is required by the command to enter in by the strait gate. Let who may call it preciseness, but let us be steady to our principles and to our duty.

\* Matt. viii. 10.



Let us neither over-rate nor under-rate the difficulties which lie in our way to heaven. But let us view them exactly as they are, that we may neither be inactive nor disheartened.

Let us remember, that whatever these difficulties may be, they must be overcome, else we are undone. Necessity will make the sluggard toil, and the coward fight; but what necessity is equal to this?

Let us carefully improve the present season. If we knock now, it shall be opened unto us; but we shall knock too late after the door is finally shut.

Let us not trust in Church privileges. Let us not say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we;" but let us so improve the means of grace here, that we may be prepared for glory hereafter.

Let us realize to our minds the separation which will take place when men shall either be admitted into heaven, or cast off for ever; and, in doing so, let us follow the one party in the path of faith and holiness to glory; and let us sedulously avoid the course of the other, saying, each of us, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

As we are among the very first in point of privileges, let us not be the last in point of improvement. Much having been given to us, much will be required of us.

Finally, while we give ourselves diligently to the business of salvation, let us look for success in the way of dependence on divine grace implored by prayer. This alone can enable us to overcome the difficulties which lie in our way; and this will enable us to do so effectually. May the Lord stand with us, and strengthen us. May the Lord "deliver us from every evil work, and preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

## LECTURE LXXVI.

LUKE XIII. 31-35.

"The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee. 32. And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. 33. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. 34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! 35. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

THE latter part of our Saviour's life on earth was filled up, with the utmost activity, in publishing, and confirming by miracles, the gospel of the kingdom. It would seem that every day witnessed several of these exertions. He had already been teaching on the day here referred to, and on the same day, he embraces an opportunity of teaching again.

"*The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee.*" This intimation and advice might appear to argue a kind intention on the part of these Pharisees towards Christ, were we not already so fully aware of the inimical disposition of almost all of their sect. In fact, neither their general demeanour towards him, nor the particular circumstances of this case, will allow us to give them credit for this interference. In the clause as in our version, "Herod will kill thee," the word "will," according to common use, would be considered as the auxiliary, putting the verb "to kill," in the future tense: but this is not the real meaning, for, in the original, the verb is not in the future tense, but there is a distinct word\* for "will," so that the meaning, as we would now render it, is, "Herod wills"—that is, wishes, desires, purposes—"to kill thee." Herod certainly hated Christ on account of his doctrines, and of

\* *Θελει*. See also John vii. 17.

the danger to which he erroneously supposed his growing influence subjected his reign. In confirmation of this, we may remark, that, though Herod was afterwards glad when he saw Jesus in Jerusalem—that is, in having his curiosity gratified—yet he, “with his men of war, set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate,” thus hastening on his condemnation, by his contumelious conduct, and probably by his direct application against him. An early Christian writer says, apparently with truth, that the instigation of Herod was the cause which, together with the clamour of the multitude, prevailed on Pontius Pilate to put Christ to death.\* At the time referred to in the passage before us, Herod would, no doubt, have been glad to have had Christ cut off, though he may not have formed any particular plan for that purpose. The odium which he had incurred by the murder of John the Baptist was so great, that it is probable Herod and his friends were now more inclined to frighten Jesus away from lower Galilee, which was part of Herod’s tetrarchy, than actually to proceed immediately to apprehend and kill him. In this view, the words of the Pharisees are to be considered as words of threatening, rather than of kind warning: nay, they were perhaps even intended to drive Christ into the snare in Judea, where these treacherous advisers might have known that he would be in more immediate danger than in Galilee.

But let us consider our Lord’s reply to this advice. “*Go ye, and tell that fox.*” The connexion leads to the opinion that by “that fox” Jesus meant Herod. We are not to consider this as an encouragement for subjects to speak bitterly and contemptuously of their rulers. The Lord said, by Moses, “Thou shalt not revile the gods,” or great men, “nor curse the ruler of thy people.” When Paul called the high priest a “whited wall,” he apologized by saying that he “wist not that it was the Lord’s high priest.” In this, our Lord, who was more than a prophet, is only employing the legitimate authority of a prophet, for, the prophets were wont faithfully to rebuke wicked rulers, and to denounce the divine displeasure against them. Isaiah said, “Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah:” and Ezekiel, “Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to

\* Lactantius, Instit., lib. iv. 18.

get dishonest gain:" and Zephaniah, "Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow."\* The fox is, at once, a peculiarly cunning and mischievous animal, and, in both these respects, was a fit emblem of Herod, in respect of his general character, and of his demeanour in this instance. The Pharisees appear to have given this advice to Christ, with the concurrence, at least, if not at the express desire, of Herod, who evidently lay in wait for a convenient opportunity of wreaking his vengeance on him.

"Go ye, and tell that fox, *Behold, I cast out devils, and do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.*" This was a defiance of Herod's impotent rage; it was letting him know that Jesus was nothing daunted by his menaces, and would not be deterred from prosecuting the great and blessed work he had undertaken. "I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day," said he, at another time; "the night cometh when no man can work." He desired them to inform Herod, that he would continue to cast out devils, and work other miracles of healing, in confirmation of his doctrine, for a time, even as long as might be necessary. If, as there is every reason to believe, in the expression being "perfected," he pointed to his death, we cannot understand him as intimating that he was to be crucified on the third day after that on which he spoke, for a considerable period of time elapsed before that all-important event. It may have been, indeed, that in two days' journeying more he would have been out of the territories over which Herod's jurisdiction extended; but that circumstance would not altogether account for what Christ here says. The true solution of the difficulty seems to be this, that he is employing an idiomatic form of speech, according to which, he is to be understood, not as fixing a precise number of days, but as using a certain for an uncertain number, to intimate that he was yet to go on for some short time as he was doing. Any more strict interpretation of this and the following verse, would make these verses contradict each other: for, whereas, in this verse, he says that he was to work miracles to-day and to-morrow, and to be perfected, or die, on the third day; in the next verse, he says that he was to walk, or live, to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following. There are several instances in Scripture, in which that figure of speech is used, by which

\* *Ish. i. 10; Ezek. xxii. 27; Zeph. iii. 3.*

a certain is put for an uncertain number; that is, in which (though no event is uncertain to God) it is not intended to limit what is spoken of to the precise number specified. For example,\* "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee:" "Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions and for four, I will not turn away the punishment of Damascus;" and the same declaration is repeated seven times, with regard to other seven nations. Peter said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, until seventy times seven;" that is, very often, even as often as he repents. "After two days will he revive us; in the third he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." This last passage comes nearest to that under consideration. It is probable, indeed, that, in its secondary sense, it is an exact prediction of the resurrection of Christ as the first-fruits, on the third day after his death; but, in its primary sense, it surely points to the revival of penitents; and, in that sense, implies a promise, not that the Lord will always revive them exactly on the third day, but that he will revive them soon, as it were in a few days. So here our Lord intimated that, without regarding Herod, or any of his enemies, he was to proceed with his work, "to-day and to-morrow;" that is, though not for a long period, not even very many days, yet for some days—for a short time longer.

"And the third day," or after that short time, "I shall be perfected." This being "perfected" relates both to Christ's work, and to Christ himself. It relates to his work; and, in reference to it, the word which is here rendered "perfected" is in other places rendered "finished," or, "accomplished." Thus, Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."—"I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." The accomplishment of the great work of redemption implied, and indeed, in a great measure, consisted in the Saviour's death; hence, the two ideas are connected, and even spoken of as the same. Thus, in John's description of the crucifixion, "Jesus, knowing that

\* Job v. 19; Amos i. 3; Matt. xviii. 21; Hos. vi. 2. And, somewhat in the same way, with reference to past time, the phrase, "yesterday and the third day," signifies some time before, or simply, before. See in Hebrew, Exod. iv. 10; Deut. xix. 4; 1 Sam. xix. 7.

all things were now accomplished," or, on the very point of being accomplished, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."—"And when he had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." But this expression, being perfected, refers also to Christ himself. His death not only perfected the redemption of his people, but perfected his own character, finished his sufferings, introduced him fully into the exercise of the office, and secured the possession of the glories, of Mediator, according to his own prayer,\* "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self." The two truths of Christ's being perfected, or completed in every respect as a Saviour for sinners, and securing a revenue of mediatorial happiness and glory to himself, by his death, are taught in these verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews,†—"It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—"Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."—"The word of the oath" maketh him our high priest, who by the offering of himself once, "is consecrated" (the same word is here rendered "perfected") "for evermore."

Our Lord knew that he was, ere long, to be betrayed, condemned, and put to death; "*Nevertheless*," says he, repeating with an addition, what he had said before, "*I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following*"—I must openly prosecute my journey, in teaching and working miracles, for some days, and I shall not die in Herod's territories: "*for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*" He did not, in this, assert it to be a thing absolutely impossible, or that had never actually taken place, that a prophet should be put to death elsewhere: for John the Baptist had, not very long before, suffered martyrdom in Galilee. The meaning is, that it was not to be expected;‡ and *that* both because the sanhedrim, or supreme council, who sat in Jerusalem, formed the tribunal for trying prophets, and also because that city had, in fact, been formerly stained with the blood of so many of God's holy prophets.

\* John xvii. 4.

† Heb. ii. 10, v. 9, vii. 28.

‡ Οὐκ ἔστιν ἰδεῖν.

In this connexion, Jesus uttered the beautiful and pathetic exclamation in the two last verses of this chapter. The exclamation opens with the words, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee.*" He spake in the present time; and the description was applicable, indefinitely, to the past, present, and future history of the city. Retrospectively, his words were too true; for, it was there that the greater number of the prophets had been slain, though the nation generally had, in many cases, to answer for the guilt. Some particular cases of this are recorded. One case was that of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom the Jews, and, of course, especially the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "slew between the temple and the altar," as our Lord expresses it; or, as it is in the Old Testament history, "whom the people conspired against, and stoned with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord." \* Another case was that of Urijah,† who had to escape for his life into Egypt, but king Jehoiakim sent men "and they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt; and brought him unto Jehoiakim, the king, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people." But, not to dwell on particular instances, we read, more generally, in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy:" and briefly, in Jer. ii. 30: "O Judah," "your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion." Their persecuting spirit, at the time Jesus was speaking, showed that they approved of these atrocious deeds of their fathers: and that spirit soon broke out in similar crimes, as in the case of Stephen, the first of a host of martyrs. That holy man testified against them thus: "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them who showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." Having thus testified, Stephen paid the penalty of his life. But why go farther,

\* Matt. xxiii. 35; 2 Chron. xxiv. 21.

† Jer. xxvi. 23.

in proof and illustration of this charge, than the most atrocious crime that ever was perpetrated—the murder, by the people of Jerusalem, of the Lord of glory? “His blood be on us, and on our children!” said they: and so, in dire vengeance, it was, and still is upon them.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: *how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!*” This familiar, but tender and beautiful comparison, is often used, in Scripture, to represent the shelter, comfort, and guidance which are found in the divine mercy and power. “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead Israel.” Boaz said to Ruth, “A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” This is, especially, a frequent figure in the Psalms. “Hide me under the shadow of thy wings.”—“How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.”—“In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.”—“In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.”—“He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.” In all these passages, the figure is nearly the same. Its application by our Lord here is truly beautiful. As the parent fowl, when she sees a bird of prey hovering over her scattered brood, and ready to seize some of them, gives them the well-known signal of danger, collects them together, extends her wings for their protection, and exposes herself to danger in defending them; or, as when in rain and cold, she shelters and cherishes them, and will rather perish herself than allow them to suffer: so the Redeemer, when he saw the danger to which, because of their sins, the Jews were exposed from the Roman eagle and armies, and still more from the impending wrath of God, called on them to come to him for shelter, and was ready to do and suffer every thing for their safety. How often “would” he—was he willing, was he desirous, did he endeavour, to have gathered them! How often, and how long were they called on and waited for by the instrumentality of his prophets! and how often, how perseveringly, and how earnestly had he himself called on them with his own voice, for the last three years! He would, but



they would not. They, as a body, obstinately rejected his call, and therefore, drew down on themselves the most awful calamities.

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Their house might here signify their dwelling-place, or residence: but, it rather seems to signify the temple. And here it is observable, that it is here called *their* house, and not God's house (as it was usually called), intimating that the Lord no longer dwelt in it, or acknowledged it as his. Somewhat in the same way, on the occasion of the golden calf,\* "The Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down, for *thy* people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." The overthrow of the Jewish city, temple, and nation, was absolutely fixed in God's purpose, and was drawing on apace; and therefore, our Lord speaks of it as if it had already taken place. It would be premature, however, to enter on the consideration of that catastrophe here.

Our Lord then concludes in these words, "*And verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*" Various opinions are entertained as to the exact meaning of these words. It seems sufficiently plain that they do not refer to his triumphant entry into Jerusalem; because, though the multitude on that occasion did cry out, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," he spoke the words in question, a second time, and after his entry, as appears from the history of Matthew, in which his entry is recorded in the 21st chapter, and words almost the same as those now under consideration are attributed to him at the end of the 23d chapter of the same Evangelist. We must, therefore, refer them to some subsequent period. Still, several difficulties attend the absolute fixing of the meaning. It is remarked that the word "until," or "till," does not necessarily imply that a thing which it is affirmed shall not happen up to a certain period, shall take place then, or afterwards; as, for example, when Job says, "Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me;" and when Jesus says, in the parable, "Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." It is remarked also, that the word† rendered "shall say," may signify *would* say, or wish to say, or be glad to say, if ye could. There remains, too, the distinction between the

\* Exod. xxxii. 7.

† Εἰπῆντι.

literal and figurative meaning of the words, "see," and, "come," whereon to ground different interpretations. Some are for referring the passage to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem: some to the readiness with which the Jews, from their desire for the coming of Messiah, according to their own ideas, were led to acknowledge false pretensions; some to the time of their general conversion to Christianity; and some to the judgment at the last day. It is certain that there are many prophetic declarations, which, while they receive a partial accomplishment in different events, are to be completely fulfilled in the consummation of all things. Without altogether setting aside, then, the idea that these words may receive, in some respects literally, and in some figuratively, a partial accomplishment in these previous events; I think we should view them as referring chiefly to Christ's coming in the great day of judgment, at the end of the world. This is the true literal sight, and coming, of which he thus spoke before the council,\* "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then shall all his people welcome him indeed; and then shall all his enemies deeply regret that they did not welcome him before. How touching, and, at the same time, how awakening, these words, as addressed to the Jews! and what infatuation must have befallen them, when, notwithstanding such means, they continued regardless of the things which belonged to their peace, till they were for ever hid from their eyes!

In improving this passage, we may,

1. Learn from it *the craft and malice of the enemies of the gospel, and of our salvation*. These qualities are united, and exist in great strength, in our invisible adversary, and, more or less, characterize all his emissaries. The enemies of the truth and of our souls are like Herod, that fox. They speak peace, but mischief is in their hearts. Let us be on our guard against them. When those who, loving not the truth themselves, seek to turn us away from it, let us not give heed to their professions of friendship. "When they speak fair, let us not believe them, for there are seven abominations in their heart." Let us beware of their "cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." That we may be able to meet them, let us be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves, and commit the keeping of our souls to God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

\* Mark xiv. 62.

2. The example of Christ should teach and encourage us *not to be deterred from the path of duty by any threatenings* of enemies, or misgivings of weak friends. He continued to prosecute his work faithfully and boldly, notwithstanding every threat and danger. So also did many prophets and worthies. Shemaiah endeavoured to draw off Nehemiah\* from the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, saying, "They will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee." But Nehemiah said, "Should such a man as I flee?"—"We are all immortal till our work is done." The place, time, and manner of our death, are in God's hand, and, like those of Christ's, are determined. Let us, then, persevere in the path of duty, believing that God will restrain the remainder of man's wrath, and bring us safely through, till our appointed time arrive. It is right, too, that we should view our time as short, that we may be diligent in our great work. And it is an encouraging view here suggested of death, as that by which believers, in conformity to Christ (so far as there can be any parallel between him who never knew any sin, and those who are distressed with its remains), are perfected. At death, the purposes of providence and grace with regard to them, are accomplished; they finish their course with joy, and join "the spirits of just men made perfect." These views may well encourage them to live faithfully, while they do live, and to die cheerfully, when they come to die.

3. Let us *believe that Christ was indeed perfected by his sufferings*—perfected as a Saviour for us; and let us rest on him accordingly. He has done and suffered every thing necessary to purchase for us pardon and eternal life. "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Let us beware of imagining that he has left any thing for us to do in the way of satisfying for our sins, and meriting the favour of God. Let us beware of that delusive blind which prevents so many from seeing the glory of the Saviour, and keeps so many hearts hard, and so many consciences seared. Christ's merits were not payment in part, but they were the full price of salvation. He disdains a divided honour. He rejects a partial trust. It will be in vain to found one end of our house on the rock, if the other rest on shifting sand. Let us rest on him solely. He said, "It is finished." Let him, then, be received by us without hesitation, as "the author and finisher of our faith."

\* Neh. vi. 10.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ should now be considered as thus tenderly *expostulating with you who have hitherto resisted his invitations*, "How often would I have gathered you together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Your case is substantially the same with that of the unbelieving Jews; and these words, as addressed to you, imply that you are in a very *exposed and dangerous condition*. The Lord Jesus would not propose to gather you under the wings of his protection, if you were not in danger. You are in danger from the evil one, from providential judgments, from the curse of a broken law, from the awards of insulted justice, and from the wrath of an offended God. You are in danger of being cut off in sin, and overwhelmed in sudden and hopeless ruin. But these words imply, farther, that *if you will betake yourselves to Jesus Christ, you shall be safe*; nay, that he is ready to receive the worst of you under his protection. How can you doubt this, when you hear him so tenderly expostulating with those who killed the prophets, and who, he knew, were so soon to crucify himself? What more can you require to convince you that he is ready to receive you? "Him that cometh unto me," saith he, "I will in no wise cast out." Has he not been long and often calling on you to come to him? Has he not been calling you by providences, by checks of conscience, and by the invitations of his preached gospel? How often would he have gathered you! But these words also imply that you are unwilling to come to him for safety. "Ye would not." Do not deceive yourselves here. You may think you are willing, nay, desirous to be saved; but, whatever you may imagine, you are not willing;—you are not willing to be saved from wrath in the only practicable way, in Christ's way, in the way of grace excluding all boasting, and of holiness striking at the root of all depravity. You have never been willing to have such a salvation as this. Now this unwillingness of yours is the true cause of your ruin. You are unable, it is true, to come to Christ; but your inability consists in the aversion of your hearts. "Ye will not come unto me," saith Christ, "that ye might have life." It is intimated, too, in this expostulation, that your unwillingness is very unreasonable, and very lamentable. How affecting to see you voluntarily cleaving to destruction, and refusing the offered safety! Therefore it was that Jesus so pathetically lamented over Jerusalem of old, and therefore it is that he

now laments, and would have us to lament, in the same strain, over you. Be wise at last, and flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel.

Finally, *let us all welcome the Redeemer*, while he is represented to the eye of faith *coming in the gospel*, to save us, in order that we may be prepared to welcome him when he appears the second time, without sin, unto the final salvation of his people. He is come in the name, with the authority, and with the personal qualifications, of the Lord; let us say, in the language of the Psalmist, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." We must all meet him face to face at last. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." How sad the situation of those who would fain join the shout of welcome, but dare not, and cannot! Let us receive him with all our hearts now, that when he is near at hand, and, as it were, heard saying, "Surely I come quickly," we may gladly reply, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

## LECTURE LXXVII.

## LUKE XIV. 1-11.

“And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath-day, that they watched him. 2. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. 3. And Jesus, answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? 4. And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go: 5. And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day? 6. And they could not answer him again to these things. 7. ¶ And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

LET pious persons conduct themselves as they may, the ungodly and worldly will never be pleased. “John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, He hath a devil.” Jesus Christ observed no such austerity, and they said, “Behold, a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” Both of them, however, were right; and “Wisdom is justified of all her children.” The portion of our Saviour’s history now read will give us an opportunity of observing the working of this discontented and captious spirit, and also furnish us with a variety of useful lessons.

Our Lord, we are here told, “*went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees,*”\* or one of the rulers of the Pharisees; that is, as some think, one of the rulers of the people who was of the sect of the Pharisees; or, as others think, a person of great influence among the Pharisees. Opposed as this Pharisee, like the most of his sect, appears to have been

\* Τινος τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν Φαρισαίων.

to the gospel, our Lord did not refuse to hold any intercourse with him, for that would have been to have declined a favourable opportunity of promoting the gospel in a way which by no means compromised his own principles and character, or acknowledged the correctness of those of the Pharisees. The expression, "*to eat bread*," means to partake, in every way, of the hospitality of the table, as at dinner or supper. It was *on the Sabbath-day*, that our Lord thus went to eat bread in the house of the Pharisee. Let it be observed, that he did this during the course of his journey, and in some place where he wished to stop on the Sabbath to teach. It is obvious that, in such circumstances, he stood in need of hospitality, and that he could not have obtained any refreshment, except in the house of a stranger. His conduct, then, on this occasion, when all the circumstances are taken into consideration, is inconsistent with a superstitious observance of the Sabbath, and yet furnishes no plea for its lax observance. It teaches us that we should be ready both to receive, and to show whatever hospitality may be really necessary on the Sabbath; and it especially sanctions needful attentions to those who are from home. At the same time, it can never fairly be urged as a plea for common visiting on the Sabbath. Most certainly, the receiving and the frequenting of company, in the usual sense of the word, and for the purpose of worldly intercourse and gratification, are altogether inconsistent with the due observance of this holy day. It is true that there were several other persons present in the Pharisee's house at this meal; for this there may, or there may not, have been a good reason; for this, too, however it may have been, Jesus was not answerable; nor are we called on to defend in every respect the conduct of any of the rest of the party. Besides, when this event in our Lord's history is referred to as an example, it should never be forgotten how suitably to the great end of the Sabbath he employed the time, and how much spiritual instruction he uttered, for the benefit of all who were present.

While our Lord was thus in the house of the Pharisee, "*they watched him*," that is, the Pharisee himself, and the rest who were present, especially the lawyers and other Pharisees, carefully and maliciously observed Christ, in order to find something whereof to accuse him. This was very bad in all of them, but especially in the master of the house. Even heathens regard any violation of the laws of hospi-

tality, on the part either of the entertained or of the entertainer, as a very heinous crime. How iniquitous, then, was it, in this man, under the pretence of kindness, to invite Jesus to his house, and then to lay snares, and watch for his halting! It would be some relief to the blackness of this scene, could we find any reason for exempting at least the landlord from this charge; but there does not appear any ground for the exception. It would have been well, if this bad spirit had died with that race of Pharisees; but Pharisees, in principle, still everywhere exist, and in them this unpleasant feature is perpetuated. Are they not those who are capable of concealing the designs of treachery under the mask of friendship? Are there not persons to be met with in company, who maliciously watch those who are considered pious, and are ready to take an unfair advantage of them? Are there not even some who attend religious meetings on the Sabbath, with a suspicious and captious spirit, and who, disdainful of instruction, and drawing themselves up against serious impressions, hear only with the desire of being able to lay hold on something which they may afterwards speak against, or find capable of being perversely twisted into a subject of grave charge, or light ridicule? Doubtless, it is the duty of those who have to advocate Christianity, to give no just cause for such conduct; and it should not be forgotten, that when an excuse is furnished for it, by anything, either decidedly wrong in the matter, or very unbecoming in the manner, sin attaches to both parties. Let, however, those who can watch maliciously for faults, remember that there is an eye watching *them*, even the all-seeing eye of Him who will neither impute to them that of which they are not guilty, nor fail to mark with his disapprobation what really deserves it.

While they were now watching Christ with an evil eye, "*Behold, there was a certain man before him who had the dropsy.*" It does not appear whether this afflicted man had come at the request of the Pharisee, or had ventured to enter of his own accord, in the desire and expectation of a cure; but the wisdom and goodness of Providence are to be noticed in his being present at this juncture, when his own comfort, and the honour of Christ, were to be thereby so signally promoted.

"*And Jesus, answering, spake unto the lawyers*" (or scribes) "*and Pharisees,*" who were present, "*saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?*" This is another of the



many instances in which the expression "answering," signifies, not answering to a question proposed in words, but a spontaneous speaking in answer to the thoughts of those who are addressed. Our Lord well knew what was passing in their minds, and came forward to meet their rising objections. In the case of the man with the withered hand, the question was put to our Lord by the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days?"\* but here, he puts the question to them. We see how soon Jesus began to improve the occasion in a way suitable to the day. He talks of the Sabbath, and of things relating to it. It would be very useful still to inquire, in a proper spirit, what might lawfully be done on this day, and what might not. Some things would be allowed, and others condemned.

The question which our Lord now put to the lawyers and Pharisees, admitted of only one answer at all consistent with common sense: but would they give it? By no means. "*They held their peace.*" They felt that a just reply would subvert their own error, and justify Christ. Unable to maintain, but too proud to acknowledge, their error, they were silent altogether. So, when he asked of some of a similar character afterwards, whence the baptism of John was, whether it was from heaven, or of men; though they had been forward enough to give their opinion on other occasions, they merely said they could not tell. There was meanness, as well as obstinacy, in this conduct. And yet, we often meet with something very like it. When we take some thoughtless men off their guard—that is, when they are not aware that what we advance can have any reference to them—they will say not a little to the purpose, and allow much, even on the subject of religion: but when they begin to suspect that we entertain, what surely is a truly benevolent desire, the desire to do them good, how backward are they to acknowledge the plainest truths, and how unwilling to answer the simplest questions! Or, if they are not so rude as to maintain absolute silence, and if they feel themselves constrained to assent to some obvious principle; the very manner in which they signify their assent betrays their determination to resist the practical inference and personal application. If invited calmly to consider the question, they shun the light, or shut their eyes against it. They will not dwell on what, by just inference, would bear against themselves. They pretend not to see the force of the argument;

\* Matt. xii. 10.

and indeed, they sometimes become very dull in their apprehension, and erroneous in their inferences, by the wilful indulgence of such a spirit. Let us all beware of giving place, in any degree, to this spirit: and let us, in reference both to ourselves and others, cultivate a spirit of candour and openness to conviction.

Finding that they made him no answer, our Lord proceeded boldly, in the presence of them all. "*He took the man,*" or, "taking him by the hand," as the meaning is, when fully expressed: and this he did, we may believe, in the way of condescension and kindness to the man, and in order to turn the attention of the company to the miracle he was about to perform. "*And he healed him*"—he miraculously restored him to perfect health, and removed every vestige of the disease; thus conferring a signal blessing on the afflicted man, and adding another to the many signs of his own Messiahship. And having healed him, "*he let him go*"—he dismissed him, or sent him away."

Not contented with having put the before mentioned question, in further justification of himself, Jesus appealed to their own conduct. "*He answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass, or an ox, fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?*" This is similar to the argument from leading their animals to watering, which he employed in the preceding chapter, in defence of his healing, on the Sabbath, the woman who had the spirit of infirmity. We heard also Christ's reasoning in defence of works of mercy on the Sabbath in the 6th chapter, in the case of the man whose right hand was withered. We need not, therefore, enlarge on this point here. Surely, when these Jews themselves held it right, and were accustomed, to undergo, on the Sabbath, the labour necessary to relieve beasts of the stall, it was absurd in them to object to the relief which Jesus, with the utmost ease, afforded, on that day, to human beings.

"*And they could not answer him again to these things.*" They were so overpowered by the force of what he said, that they could not find anything plausible to say in reply. Yet it is plain that they were so obstinate that they would not acknowledge that they were convinced. It would have been gratifying, if they had confessed and renounced their error; but they became sullen, and remained silent. If any of you, my friends, have been holding erroneous or defective views of religion, and are now beginning to be convinced

of it, learn, from the unamiable conduct of these Pharisees, not to be obstinate. Do not inwardly cling to such views, in defiance of scriptural evidence; and, if your better judgment convince you of their fallacy, do not, for the sake of what you may be disposed to view as a dignified consistency, but what is really obstinacy and pride, do not hesitate to confess that you were mistaken, and do not hesitate to act according to your amended creed. If by scriptural arguments for a life of faith and holiness, you are reduced to the state in which you "cannot answer again to these things," do not stifle your convictions; for, if you do, there is a day coming in which the Lord himself will call you to account, and you shall be speechless. Say now, with due consideration, and practical improvement, like Job, "What shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" Think well, too, of Jeremiah's question, "What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?" Yield at once to the influence of gospel doctrine and precept now; so shall you be able to stand in the day of final reckoning.

Having thus briefly noticed the facts stated, and the chief practical lessons taught, in the opening verses of the chapter, let us leave them without farther remark, and turn our attention to the subject of the next five verses. In what our Lord here says, he is spoken of by Luke as putting forth "*a parable*." It is not exactly a parable, in the limited sense of a comparison, or in the form of a supposed case related as a fact; but it is certainly a parable, in the more general sense of grave instruction founded on a supposed case spoken of as such, and suggested by present circumstances. What Jesus now said was suggested by the circumstances in which he was placed, and by what he saw passing before his eyes. He spoke the parable to those who had been invited to the dinner, "*when he marked how they*" ambitiously "*chose out,*" for themselves, "*the chief rooms,*" or, as we should rather express it, the chief seats at the table, "*saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding,*" or wedding-feast, and, by parity of reason, to any entertainment, "*sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man,*" a man of higher rank, "*than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him*"—the master of the house who invited you both, "*come and say to thee, Give this man place,*" or, give this place to this person, "*and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room*"—conscious of

having exposed thyself by thy arrogance, and desirous to avoid the danger of being desired to move lower down. "*But*," on the contrary, "*when thou art*" thus "*bidden*" to an entertainment, "*go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend*" (addressing thee by that kind and respectful title), "*go up higher; then shalt thou have worship*" (this English word is not now used in this way—instead of it we use the word respect, or honour), then shalt thou have honour "*in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.*" There is here, probably, a reference to that passage in Prov. xxv. 6: "Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: for, better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen."

This direction, as here given by our Lord, must at once commend itself to every person of any good feeling and sense of propriety, as a most just and becoming rule of conduct in company. The words in which it is given are too plain to require any explanation; yet, the more they are considered, the more does the beauty of them appear. The direction is, no doubt, to be understood as literally applicable to Christians situated as here supposed in society; yet it is not to be so limited: on the contrary, it is plainly intended to check pride, and encourage humility, universally. Our Lord himself leads us on to this extended application of it, when he closes, and sums up the parable, in these words, "*For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*" The humility which Jesus here enjoins, must be considered as true Christian humility—humility founded in a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and leading us to walk humbly both with God and man. Humility, as operating in the way here enjoined, also implies a superiority of mind to mere external distinctions, and a readiness to give place to others. In reference to taking places in company—unquestionable as is the rule here laid down, and impossible as it is that it can ever operate too strongly, if properly understood, it may, from being misunderstood, operate in a very absurd way, and then be carried to such an extreme, as to become ridiculous. Thus, though no man ought ambitiously to affect distinction to himself, it would be annoying to others, and, on that account, improper, were persons of the higher ranks

systematically to insist on occupying the less honourable places. There are certain decencies of life, which are sufficiently understood, and agreed on by common consent; and the neglect, and especially the intentional opposing, of which would be unbecoming. It is to be remembered, too, that real pride may lurk under the appearance of humility in such cases. Without too much nicety, such matters should be arranged as quietly and quickly as possible; whatever wish may be expressed by the person, or persons, presiding, should be complied with immediately; and none should be offended. Thus, for the rational and scriptural exercise of humility in common life, there is need both for sincerity and discretion.

We may here observe, that true religion has an improving effect on the manners. Not that it transforms a rude peasant into a polished courtier; but, it certainly teaches, in many respects, those who attend to its injunctions, and feel its civilizing influence, to act as becomes their several stations, giving rules not only for their conduct to God, but for their conduct to men. Other advantages being equal, it makes an improvement on the manners much more certainly and satisfactorily than the best rules of mere worldly politeness. "My son," says the wise man, "hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." Besides, such becoming conduct, flowing from true piety and humility, is beautiful in the eye of God. More ornamental than any outward adorning whatever, is "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

But, as already observed, true Christian humility is a very deep and a thorough humility. Let me beseech you all to seek that humility which originates in the heartfelt conviction of your lost, condemned, depraved, and helpless condition by nature, and which is carried out into the complete renunciation of self-righteousness, and into the thankfully consenting to be indebted solely to the free grace of God through Jesus Christ. And then, study to maintain an abiding sense of your remaining unworthiness and short-coming, and of your constant obligation to the same grace. In this way there will be in you a prevalent feeling of lowliness which will dispose you "not to think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think, but to think soberly," and

which will, on the whole, lead you to behave with becoming modesty and humility in your intercourse with your fellow-creatures. And after the principle of genuine humility, in connexion with repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, has been laid in your mind, it will still be useful for keeping down pride, which is here condemned, and cherishing that kind of humility which is here more directly enjoined, that you attend well to such considerations as the following.

Consider how greatly this humility would *contribute to the peace and happiness of yourselves, and of society in general*. As you regard your own peace, think how you would destroy it by the vexations of pride and envy, and by suspicions that you are overlooked, or slighted: and how, on the contrary, you would in a great measure rise superior to the power of others to vex you, by a lowly opinion of yourselves, and a readiness to yield. So, on a greater scale, the same humble behaviour would prevent disputes and cherish peace in society, whether civil or religious. “Only by pride cometh contention.”—“If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.”—“Whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts?” How beautiful Paul’s exhortation, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another!” Let humility be universal: and so then will harmony.

Consider, next, how as this *humility is expected in those who profess to have received the gospel, it is calculated to adorn and recommend it to others*. It is expected in Christians that they shall be distinguished for this grace, and it is essential to the very being of true religion. How unseemly the request, “Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom!”—“When the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.” On the other hand, how becoming the willingness of Abraham to go either to the right hand or to the left, to avoid a dispute with Lot! Even worldly men are capable of judging of what is commendable in such cases. By such becoming conduct, Christians sometimes put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and contribute not a little to lead others to glorify God.

Consider, further, *the result*, as expressed in the words,

“Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” It generally happens, in society, that those who endeavour to push themselves forward improperly, are thereby lowered in public estimation, and met in a way which throws them farther back than before; while modesty is admired and commended. And such is always the case, in respect of religion, and the judgment of God; for, though impudence may occasionally prove successful in secular affairs, it can never prove successful in spiritual. See, then, the folly of such proud aspiring; for, it will be disappointed, probably in this life, and certainly in the next. “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for, God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

Consider, finally, *the example of your Lord and Saviour*; for, this is the most affecting consideration of all. Pride was never made for man, nor high looks for the sons of men. It is unamiable and criminal in itself, and highly absurd when indulged by such beings as we are. Many circumstances combine to teach us humility. Whether we advert to our origin, or to our dependence on providence, or to our weakness, or to our fallen and sinful state, we see ample ground for self-abasement. The whole system of the gospel, too, is admirably calculated to promote this spirit: but, the most striking lesson of this kind which it reads, is contained in the example of the Redeemer. Think of him veiling his glory and tabernacling on earth. See him washing his disciples' feet. See him wandering through the world in penury and scorn, degraded, in the estimation of mortals, below their own level, suffering, as a criminal, an ignominious death, and, at last, laid in the tomb. You are not contemplating the grave of an earthly sovereign, or of any of the princes of this world. You would not be much surprised to find the highest of the human race in this situation; for, the small and the great are here. But you are contemplating the humiliation of him who created the world, who has the government of it on his shoulder, and who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. At his pleasure, princes reign or fall, nations conquer or are destroyed. Nay, the holy angels of heaven veil their faces with their wings before

him, and its saints cast their crowns at his feet. Say, then, how great was his humility. Compared with this, the most remarkable instances of condescension in man are nothing. No greater contrast can be conceived. He who calls the stars his own, and fills the immensity of space, is shut up within the narrow limits of a sepulchre. He who in resplendent beauty sits on the throne of heaven giving law to creation, is deposited out of sight a mangled corpse, too shocking to be beheld! Infinite condescension! It never can be at all equalled: but, it should be imitated. Has our Lord shown such condescension, and shall we be elated with pride? Shall we, who have so much to deplore, look on ourselves as almost blameless persons, and say to others, Stand by, we are holier than you? Shall we refuse to give honour to whom honour is due, or proudly contend for the highest places, or think it below our dignity to condescend to men of low estate? Let us, by the help of God, and in imitation of our Master, banish all such sentiments. In the words of Paul to the Philippians, "Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."



## LECTURE LXXVIII.

LUKE XIV. 12-24.

"Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. 13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. 15. And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 16. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17. And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused. 19. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. 20. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. 22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

OUR Lord was now at meat, on the Sabbath, in the house of one of the chief Pharisees, where he miraculously cured a man of the dropsy, and defended that benevolent action; and where, on observing how those who were invited chose out the chief seats, he had just given an edifying lesson of humility. Having instructed those who were invited how to conduct themselves, he next addresses himself to the inviter. It is probable that this Pharisee, in the choice of his guests, was influenced more by a vain desire to have the rich, and the men of note, in his house, than by true hospitality, and therefore, stood peculiarly in need of admonition on that subject; but, however this may have been, the admonition given demands universal attention.

*"Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner, or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy*

*brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But, when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed,\* the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*" There are, in Scripture, several prohibitions which are given in an absolute form, but which are to be understood with certain restrictive explanations: and there are some passages, in which, when of two things spoken of, the one is forbidden, and the other enjoined, the meaning is, not that the one is altogether unlawful, but that it is comparatively unimportant, and that the other is rather to be done. Thus, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:" "Take no thought for to-morrow:" "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth;" "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven:" "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." In this last passage, though the language is strong and unqualified, yet men are not absolutely prohibited from labouring for their daily bread; but it is taken for granted that they are so disposed naturally to attend to their temporal interest, that an express injunction to that effect is hardly necessary, and they are enjoined to labour still more earnestly for their salvation, and not to give themselves even to lawful worldly pursuits, to such a degree as would interfere with their spiritual welfare. This rule of interpretation is to be applied to the passage under review, while it is to be remembered that the epithet, "rich," not only in grammatical construction, according to the original, but also in reason, must be viewed as belonging not only to the word "neighbours," but to the words, "friends," "brethren," and "kinsmen;" for, if persons in poor circumstances be related to us, the relation is surely an additional reason why we should pay attention to them, and not a reason for neglecting them.† In this passage, then, though the language is strong, Christians are by no means altogether prohibited from asking their friends, relations, and neighbours, of any rank, to their houses. They have the general rule, that "those who have friends should show themselves friendly," and that they should "use hospitality without grudging." At the same time, most men are sufficiently inclined to pay attention to those with whom they are particularly connected, and those with whom they think it honourable, or expect that it will

\* Ἀναπηροὺς, the disabled in any way.

† Grotius.

be profitable for them, to be intimate; and therefore, there is little occasion to urge that on them so far as it is lawful. But we are here taught, that there is nothing particularly praiseworthy in such attentions, nay, that they are sinful, when carried to such an extent as to interfere with the duties of charity, and that we must not think of placing to the account of benevolence what we thus do from ostentation, or from the selfish desire of a return. There is, doubtless, too much of this, even in families where better things might be expected. Let us beware of all such inadequate motives, lest the Lord say of us, "Verily they have their reward;" that is, They have it already, in being seen and recompensed of men; and therefore, shall have no reward hereafter.

With regard to inviting the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, some have occasionally followed this precept to the very letter; and there is, doubtless, something very excellent in such acts of kindness, when they are shown without imprudence, and without ostentation: yet, after all, it is probably the spirit, rather than the letter, of this injunction, which is to be considered as universally binding. This exact mode of charity may suit better in a simple than in a more refined age. Where the state of society (as with us) is very artificial, our plans for providing for the poor, as well as our other plans, must, more or less, partake of the same artificial character; and some ideas which first occur, may not always be the best suited to existing circumstances. Besides the way here mentioned, there are other ways of effectually helping the poor. There is, for example, that of sending food to their houses, or providing it for them in some other way. "Go your way," said Nehemiah, Ezra, and the priests, to the people, "eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." Job could say, "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;" "if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep:" "then let my arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." We read of Dorcas making coats and garments for the poor; this, too, is an excellent charity. And we are directed to lay by us in store, for the poor, as God has prospered us, against the first day of the

week. In short, the principle of charity here inculcated, should be uniformly acted on by us, in the most judicious way, as God gives us ability and opportunity. Such charity will not only be serviceable to the poor, but, if it flow (as we ought to be careful that it do flow) from faith in Christ, and a sense of duty, it will be acceptable to God. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen," saith the Lord, "to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" And then, what the Lord thus now accepts, he will, at last, graciously reward, or "recompense, at the resurrection of the just." This is a reward altogether of grace, as respects his people, though it is of justice, as purchased by Christ for them, and of truth and faithfulness, as promised to them by God. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."—"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth."

Here, then, my friends, is one very intelligible and important duty, with which it will be our happiness and wisdom to comply, according to our various circumstances, and which especially demands the attention of those whom the providence of God enables to show hospitality. What will it avail us to have acquired the reputation of being sumptuous entertainers, and to have made many acquaintances by mutual feasts, in which vanity and selfishness reign, and Christ and his poor members are forgotten? While we study to conduct ourselves with propriety in the stations in which we are placed, and to avoid the extremes of extravagance on the one hand, and of parsimony on the other, let us be ready to do good to all as we have opportunity, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Thus we may hope to meet, at the last day, with many whom our charity has fed and clothed, and whom our words have instructed, our example encouraged, and our prayers assisted, in the way to heaven. And thus shall we have formed friendships which shall outlive the companionships of time, and for ever flourish in the kingdom where rich and poor shall be distinguished only by the progress they have made in every heavenly grace.

Encouraged by the familiarity and kindness with which

Jesus spoke, one of the guests addressed him, as in the 15th verse: "*And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*" It is not easy to determine what may have been the exact meaning the man affixed to these words, or with what degree of light he spoke them. They may admit of an application to the kingdom of God above; for, the happiness of heaven is set forth under the emblem of an entertainment, as when Christ speaks of "drinking wine" new with his disciples in his Father's kingdom, and making them "sit down to meat," and when it is said that "the Lamb shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters," and that "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." The man, however, most probably, referred to the kingdom of God on earth; that is, to the state of things when that kingdom should be fully established, and its advantages fully enjoyed. From the spiritual import of the parable to which his remark gave rise, as well as from the erroneous views entertained by the generality of his countrymen of the nature of Messiah's reign, it is probable that this man, though possessed of some sincere veneration and love for Christ, here spoke much in the dark, and under the influence of low and carnal ideas. He dreamed of temporal renown and splendour, and of great entertainments, when Christ should take the civil government into his hands, and advance his adherents. On several occasions, when this tendency to carnalize and degrade the blessings which he came to bestow appeared, Jesus carefully corrected it. Thus, he said to the woman of Samaria, who thought only of the water in Jacob's deep well, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." And he corrected the carnal views of the multitude, saying, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Let this be a lesson to us, fixing our attention on the true blessings of salvation, and teaching us, with the great body of orthodox believers in every age, to distinguish correctly between earth and heaven strictly so called—between God's kingdom of grace and God's kingdom of glory. We may here observe, too, that many, like this guest, who are ignorant of the true nature of religion, express and, no doubt, feel, some desire for its

blessedness. Hence, we should be careful to be rightly informed ourselves; and then, when we find others labouring under mistakes, we should endeavour to show them the way of God more perfectly.

The remaining nine verses of the passage under consideration contain the parable of the great supper, which our Lord addressed more immediately to the guest who had just uttered the exclamation, and which was admirably fitted to clear up his views, but which was intended, also, for all who were present, nay, which is recorded for the instruction of all inquirers, till the end of time. The terms in which the parable is given are so full and plain, that it would be a wasting of time to endeavour to elucidate their literal sense: we shall, therefore, set ourselves immediately to their spiritual application. Though this parable resembles, in some respects, that of the marriage feast in the 22d chapter of Matthew, it is a distinct and independent parable. It was, doubtless, very appropriate to the Jews; but it is also very instructive as to the nature of the gospel, and the way in which it is received, in every age. Viewing it, then, in this extensive sense, and as applicable to ourselves especially, let us consider,

1. *What those gospel blessings are to which we are here invited under the comparison of a feast.* We are invited, then, to partake of the blessing of knowledge, saving knowledge, the knowledge of God, the knowledge of the truth. If pastors are given according to God's own heart, it is that they may "feed" those to whom they minister, "with knowledge and understanding." This is a precious blessing; for, this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Surely, we should count all things but loss for the excellency of this knowledge. We are invited, again, to feast on the free and full pardon of all our sins, and acceptance with God. Surely, this is a great blessing. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." This is necessary to the right enjoyment of every providential bounty. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for, God now accepteth thy works." In connexion with this, we are invited to partake of peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, holiness, strength, hope, and fellowship, not only with each other, but with the Father, and his Son Jesus

Christ. And, as following on these blessings below, we are invited to the enjoyment of perfect and endless holiness and happiness in the kingdom of God above. These particulars we can here only mention; but do they not constitute an unspeakably rich feast for the soul? In reference to these blessings, the evangelical prophet says, "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

2. Let us observe what is implied in *coming* to this feast. It supposes, then, a desire and endeavour to obtain these blessings, and an actual acceptance of them just as they are offered. Now, they are all offered along with Christ himself, and received in the way of believing in him; for, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?" And, as this quotation reminds us, these blessing are offered, and must be received, freely. Admission to this feast is absolutely free. If we presume to come, as it were, with money in our hand—to come in the idea of our own worthiness, and of our own right to enter—the Master of the feast will repel us, as insulting him by a direct disregard of his established rule, as well as by the vain supposition that the unspeakably precious blessings of the feast of salvation may be purchased with money, or with anything which poor and sinful creatures like us can furnish. It is thus that the invitation runs, and let us not hesitate to avail ourselves of it: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." All these blessings, too, we must accept conjunctly—not partially, but all of them together: we must have Christ "of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." To come to this feast, in short, is to receive the gospel by faith, accepting its blessings freely, and dedicating ourselves to the Lord according to its tenor, not only seeking to be safe and happy, but desiring and consenting to be holy in heart and life. Whoso-

ever complies with the invitation in this way, is admitted to that earthly feast of the soul which is the foretaste of the heavenly. You understand, then, what is meant by this feast, and by bidding you come to it.

3. *God employs his servants to invite persons of all descriptions to this feast.* The Lord God is the Master of the house, who makes this great feast. His own Son is the chief Servant, or Messenger of the Covenant, whom he sent to invite guests to the feast. "Behold my Servant," says he, "whom I uphold, mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." During his personal ministry on earth, he laboured assiduously in inviting men, and especially the Jews, to this feast. Under him, the apostles and evangelists were employed in this work in the first age of Christianity, and then ordinary ministers in every succeeding age. By such instruments "*many*" are bidden. The Jews, who were first bidden, had a renewed and a more explicit call when the gospel dispensation was actually introduced. But the Gentiles also are invited. Men of every description are invited; the high and the low, the decent and the scandalous, or, as it is here expressed, "*the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.*" The most depraved, the chief of sinners, are invited to receive the blessings of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, and that with the assurance that, if they come, they shall be in no wise cast out.

4. We are reminded by this parable, that *multitudes reject the gospel invitation with vain excuses*;<sup>\*</sup> and we are admonished to beware of such conduct ourselves. That the majority of those to whom the invitation was addressed at first, rejected it, is quite certain; nor is it less plain that it is rejected by multitudes at the present day. Of these, some reject it broadly and audaciously, without explanation or apology. But, the far greater number reject the invitation more civilly, so to speak; they rather decline it for a time, than in plain terms reject it, though their conduct amounts to a positive and determined refusal: they make some show of respect for it, wishing it to be believed that they are sen-

\* "With one consent," *ἀπο μιας*; this ellipsis may be supplied by *γνωμης, φωνης, ὁρας, ψυχης, γλωσσης, or αἰτίας*: the first word seems to deserve the preference; though Lightfoot's judgment in favour of the last, and deriving it from the verb in juxtaposition, *παρεαιτιεσθαι*, is very ingenious, and deserving of consideration.



sible of its value, and that they regret they cannot accept it, for reasons connected with certain things which claim their prior attention. The three excuses here mentioned are most wisely selected as a specimen. "*The first said, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.*" This was no excuse at all. Why not have complied with the invitation—why not have secured his most important concern first, and then have gone to see his ground afterwards? The second excuse was of a similar nature, "*I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.*" Neither was this any sufficient excuse; for, why not, for so weighty a reason, have delayed that trial for a short time? Both these cases are well chosen to represent how many persons are prevented from coming to Christ for the blessings of salvation by worldly employments, and how they even have the effrontery to plead these employments as justifying their neglect of religion. They "make light" of the invitation, and "go their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." They make attention to their temporal concerns an excuse for the neglect of secret, and domestic, and sometimes of public worship, and, more generally, for never giving their thoughts seriously to the things which belong to their eternal peace. In fact, those who are so completely engrossed with earthly things, have no room in their hearts for heavenly. As we regard our eternal welfare, let us be aware of everything of this kind. Let us look more to things unseen and eternal, than to things seen and temporal. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all other needful things will be added unto us.

The third said, "*I have married a wife; and therefore I cannot come.*" But it is always very properly said on this pretence, Why not have brought his wife with him? or, if he could not prevail on her to accompany him, why not have come alone? This is an example of the way in which men's connexions often prove a hindrance to their salvation. When one-half of a set of connexions are decidedly worldly, this throws a difficulty in the way of the other. Likewise, when both husband and wife forget God, they are too ready to lay the blame on each other, instead of both taking it to themselves. "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," said Adam. It may be that some of you are in danger from unhappy relative discouragement. Beware of it, however, whether it

meet you in the form of absolute prohibition, or stern threatening, or enticing allurement, or bad example, or ridicule, or general known dislike to vital religion. Endeavour, if possible, to bring your opposing, or hesitating, connexions along with you. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" At all events, let none, however near and dear to you, so far prevail with you, as to keep you from accepting the gospel invitation, and securing the blessings of the covenant of grace.

It is worthy of remark, that none of these three persons presumes to say that he ought never to come to the feast, or stays away in consequence of his being engaged in any thing criminal, but that they all acknowledge that it is their duty to come some time, and all excuse themselves on grounds connected with things which are lawful in themselves. Somewhat in the same way still it is, that the generality of men neglect the great salvation, and, of course, cannot escape. Let us think well of this matter, lest with all our exemption from outward crime, and all our worldly respectability, which are well in so far, we find ourselves without religion, and, of course, excluded from its enjoyments at last.

Once more, this parable teaches that, however many may have hitherto refused the invitation, *ministers are bound to persevere in most earnest endeavours to bring in sinners.* The office of ministers, in this respect, is weighty and responsible. The servant is here represented as returning to the Master of the house, saying, "*Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded,*" and showing him the result. And so must all ministers give in their report. It will be well for themselves, if they can say, "It is done as thou hast commanded;" but, their report will be a sad thing for those who refuse their invitation. Let this consideration weigh with the people. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." They must give in this account at last before the throne of judgment, and they should give it in, as they best can, from time to time now, at the throne of grace.

When any servant returns and reports that the invitation has been declined, the Lord is "*angry.*" Yet so gracious is he, that he generally sends the invitation again. He says

to his servant again, "Go," and "*Go quickly*,"—Go immediately, and with the speed suited to the importance of the message, and to the danger which threatens the short-lived recusants. If he fail with some, he directs him to try others. "*Go out*"—do not always wait till men come to you, but go out in search of them. "*Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city*" (a plain direction and encouragement to use active measures to get at the most neglected, careless, and ungodly portion of the community in our cities and towns), "*and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.*" And besides this, ministers are directed to "*go out into the highways and hedges*" in the country, and to bring in all they can, "*that the house may be filled.*"

"*Compel them to come in.*" Not that any bodily, external violence is to be used, in order to make men Christians: the expression does not necessarily imply any such idea,\* and the attempt would be wicked and absurd. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. But, the meaning is, that ministers are perseveringly to employ all scriptural kinds of representations and pleas, which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, are calculated so to inform men's understandings and affect their hearts, as that they may accept the invitation in the gospel. Thus it is, then, that the servant wishes to compel, to importune, to press you all to come in, at present, and would take no denial. Nor need he go beyond this parable itself for urgent pleas wherewith to press the invitation.

Be entreated to come in by the consideration of *your naturally miserable and perishing condition*. Your state is much worse than that of the poorest and most destitute inhabitant of any of our lanes, or beggar on any of our highways; that is, looking merely to their temporal poverty and destitution. Will you not, then, hungry and famishing as you are, gladly come for spiritual food and refreshment?

\* 'Αναγκασον, press them, importune them, constrain them. 'Αναγκάζω and βιάζω are often used in this sense by the Greek classics, and *cogo* and *compello* by the Latin. Astyachus was compelled ἀναγκάζεσθαι, that is, constrained, or persuaded, by the Cnicians, not to land his men; Thucydides, lib. viii.; on which there is this note by the Greek scholiast, 'Αναγκάζεται ἀντι του πειθίσθαι. In Plato de Legibus, lib. x. the expression occurs, βιάζεσθαι τοις λόγοις. In Cicero de Amicitia, when two persons unite in entreating Lælius to discourse of friendship, he says that they were using force and compelling him: "Vim hoc quidem est afferre; quid enim refert qua rogatione cogatis? cogitis certe."—"Precibus compulsi," Justin, ix. 4.

Be entreated to come in, by the consideration that "*all things are ready.*" All the preparation you can conceive is already made. God the Father is ready to receive you, God the Son has done and suffered every thing necessary. God the Holy Ghost is ready to sanctify and comfort you. To you is the word of this salvation now sent by preaching. Every blessing is ready to be bestowed on you ; open your mouth wide, and it shall be filled.

Be entreated to come in, by the consideration that *already many excellent and honourable guests have entered.* Though there be room, the feast-chamber is not empty. On the contrary, the company is both numerous and select. They are waiting and longing for your joining them. The Church are uniting with the Spirit, in inviting you. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Be entreated to come in to this feast, by the consideration that "*yet there is room.*" Yet there is room in the mercy of God ; for, he is "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Yet there is room in the merits of Christ ; for his righteousness is perfect and of infinite value, his blood cleanses from all sin, and he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him. Yet there is room in the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit ; for, he can enlighten the darkest, and regenerate the most hardened : and instead of his power being impaired by the great work he has already wrought on multitudes, he is still "the Spirit of might," and the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost may be shed on you abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Yet there is room in the Church of Christ on earth, more empty room, indeed, than there ought to be : and saints and angels will rejoice in your accession to the number of the faithful. And yet there is room in heaven. However many may be there already, there is room for many more ; and room will be found for you, if you will only comply with this invitation to prepare for it. "In my Father's house," saith Jesus, "are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you." Yes, in all these senses there is room for you yet : but, mark this, that if you obstinately reject the invitation, you will at last find that there will be no room ; there may for others, but there will be none for you.

Be entreated, therefore, finally, to come in, by the consideration, that *if you reject the invitation to the feast of gospel grace here, you shall be excluded from the feast of heavenly glory hereafter.* Thus saith the Master of the house, "*None of those who were bidden*" (that is, who were invited, but refused) "*shall taste of my supper.*" Those who are ready shall go in with him to the marriage, while those who are not, shall be shut out, and knock for admission in vain. But whither shall you be sent, if you be shut out from the marriage supper of the Lamb? Whither? that is an awful question, indeed, but it can receive only one answer. Ah! my friends, remember this, that, as there is room in heaven, so there is also room in hell. "Tophet is ordained of old: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

By such considerations as these would the servant now invite, beseech, constrain, compel you to come in. Say not that you are afraid to come; for, your fear is groundless, and if you only try, you will be admitted at once, and find a hearty welcome. Say not that you cannot come because of certain worldly hindrances: instead of that, you ought rather to say, but to say in deep humility and sorrow, that you will not come; and then the painful consciousness of the criminal aversion of your hearts will be the likely prelude to your changing completely, through the power of divine grace. You have, probably, various excuses to make for yourselves; but none of them is sufficient; none of them can stand the test of God's judgment, or God's Word. Give a due proportion of your attention, then, to your worldly affairs, and your families and connexions; but no longer delay to comply with the gospel invitation.

If you have already accepted that invitation, and tasted of the blessings of salvation, you are now called to partake of them still more largely. "Wisdom hath mingled her wine, and furnished her table," and she crieth, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."—"Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Thus shall your souls be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and you shall bless the Lord, while you live. And, when you die, you shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, to enjoy a far richer feast, at a table which shall never be drawn.

## LECTURE LXXIX.

## LUKE XIV. 25-35.

“ And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30. Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace. 33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

THE encouragements to true godliness are many and great. It is “ profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” These encouragements should be often stated, and earnestly pressed on men’s consideration. When so great anxiety is shown by the profane to bring others over to their side, those who plead for God should not be deficient in engaging representations of the paths of wisdom. “ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,” saith Solomon. “ I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her,” saith the Lord, concerning the Church. How strong, too, the desire of the apostle Paul to make the gospel agreeable to men, implied in his becoming “ all things to all men, that he might by all means save some!” At the same time, this principle may be carried too far. Thus, false prophets, of old, “ prophesied smooth things, saying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace,”

while they, no doubt, flattered themselves that they were taking the plan most likely to secure the people to God, by giving this easy and lax view of things. As long as Christianity continued depressed and persecuted, there was, comparatively, little room for this unfaithfulness to operate. But, when Christianity became openly triumphant, many improper encouragements were held out to profess faith in Christ; and the consequence was, that many were brought over nominally to the gospel, who neither knew its nature, nor felt its power. And so, in more advanced periods of the Church, many have been brought to profess themselves Christians, from imperfect views of the Christian character, and other worldly and improper inducements. Such methods, however, have never done any real service to the cause of the gospel; they have never brought over one individual to genuine religion. It is said of Philip of Macedon, that he conquered less by the sword than by gold; and bribing may still be successful in ordinary war: but no success can accompany attempts of this kind in the spiritual warfare. While no unnecessary discouragements are to be presented, we must take care not to keep back any part of the truth. We are not to seek to bring men to a religious profession by holding forth a low standard of Christian doctrine and character; but we are to state distinctly the absolute necessity of an unreserved dependence on the mercy of God by faith in the blood of Christ—of a radical change of heart—and of a holy life. We are not to seek to ensnare people, by telling them that every part of their progress will be free from anxiety, that their path will be uniformly smooth, that no opposition will arise without, and no struggle within. We must describe the trials, as well as the comforts—the labour, as well as the reward—the race, as well as the prize—the battle, as well as the victory. If these things be kept out of sight, or faintly exhibited, there may be apparent, but there can be no real, success—there may be counterfeit religion, but there can be no genuine, vital, permanent principle of godliness. Our adherents will have “no root in themselves, and when tribulation, or persecution,” or temptation of any kind, shall arise because of the word, by-and-by they will be offended:” and they will “bear no fruit unto perfection.” Desire us not, then, to follow so dishonest a method; but desire to be faithfully dealt with, that so your state may be safe, and your religion decided.

How fine an example, in this respect, is set by our Lord,

in the passage before us! Those who wish to impose on others any selfish scheme of their own, magnify, or diminish, its advantages, or disadvantages, as may best suit their purpose. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth." To all such unworthy imposition and concealment, the openness and honesty of Christ's teaching are a complete contrast.

Having left the Pharisee's house, where he had been at meat, Jesus was followed by great multitudes of people. He knew, however, that notwithstanding their thus attending him, most of them were ignorant of what was necessary to constitute them his real disciples, and quite unprepared to undergo the difficulties to which adherence to him would expose them; and therefore, that, if they followed him in their present views and state, they would apostatize in the time of trial. Knowing this, he resolved to address them in a very searching manner. So still, we must not look on the multitudes who often give outward attendance on the word, as therefore proved to be, all of them, or even most of them, on the way to heaven; but must carefully discriminate characters, and fully state what true religion requires. We may also observe, here, how wisely our Lord suited his preaching to the different characters he addressed. To the Pharisees, he spoke of humility and charity. To those who were altogether averse from the gospel, he spoke of the necessity of coming to the feast. And here, when "*multitudes*," were crowding after him, he spoke to them so as to bring the sincerity of their regard to the test. He "*turned*" round to them, and addressed them in a strain which, though it might seem calculated to repel them, unfolded a principle, without the practical embracing of which, none of them could be formed to the character of true and stable Christians.

"*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*" This is another example of what we noticed, when considering the 12th verse of this chapter, namely, of a passage in which what is expressed in strong, positive, and unrestricted language, is to be understood with certain restrictive explanations. Nothing, surely, could be more opposed to the gospel, the very spirit of which is love, and which requires us to love even our enemies, than hatred, in the usual accep-



tation of the word—that is, malevolence, towards our near connexions. They may be considered even as ourselves. “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies,” says Paul: “he that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” Every true Christian must certainly wish his friends well, and be ready to do them all the good in his power, both temporally and spiritually. The meaning is, that those who will be the true and constant disciples of Christ, must make up their minds to act towards their friends, in some respects, as if they hated them;—“disobeying their injunctions, thwarting their inclinations, rejecting their entreaties, renouncing the comfort of their society, or turning it into bitterness by exciting their resentment,”\* if faithfulness to Christ cannot be maintained by them without such painful sacrifices. Thus, the word “hate,” is here to be understood comparatively. We must hate our friends, in comparison of Christ; we must love him more than them; and if their approbation and his approbation cannot be enjoyed by us at the same time, we must forego theirs, and retain his. Our Lord himself explains his meaning in this comparative sense, in the similar passage addressed to the apostles, when they were sent out, in Matt. x. 37: “He that loveth father, or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son, or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me.”

In like manner, Jesus says, “If a man hate not”—“his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” The desire of life is natural, and, generally speaking, proper. “Skin for skin” (or, skin upon skin—that is, one piece of valuable property after another), “yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life.” Our Lord, too, instructed his disciples to endeavour to save their lives in the time of persecution, if they could do so without unfaithfulness. “When they persecute you in one city,” said he, “flee ye into another.” But, they must not love their life in comparison of him; they must be ready to part with it, rather than with his favour. As in a storm at sea, men will gladly lighten the ship, by throwing even their most valuable commodities over board, to save their temporal life; so must Christ’s disciples, in the time of persecution, be ready to part with life tem-

\* Scott.—“*Surdum te amatissimis tui præsta* — Be deaf to your dearest friends.”—*Seneca*, Ep. xxxi,

poral, to save life eternal. According to John,\* our Lord says, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." It is said of the martyrs† that "they loved not their lives unto death;" and Paul declared, what his subsequent conduct proved to be no empty boast, that he was "ready, not to be bound only, but to die"—"for the name of the Lord Jesus." We should be very thankful that our principles are not now put to the very same "fiery trial:" yet, if we are Christ's disciples indeed, we have that supreme and ardent attachment to him which would withstand that trial, were it to come.

In the same strain, our Lord adds, "*And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*" We found almost the same words recorded as spoken by him, in the 9th chapter and 23d verse.‡ There is here an allusion to the custom of condemned persons being made to carry the cross, on which they were to suffer, to the place of execution. This Jesus himself did; so that in bearing the cross, we follow him. "They took Jesus," says John, "and led him away. And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha; where they crucified him." The cross of discipleship is here put for all the self-denial and suffering to which the Christian may be, in any way, exposed. There are the cross of humiliation, the cross of renunciation of self-righteousness, the cross of the crucifixion of sin, the cross of reproach for Christ's sake, the cross of bodily affliction, and many other crosses, which must be borne submissively and readily. And this must be well considered by all who would follow Christ.

The necessity of this is farther illustrated and enforced by two parables. The first is the parable of the inconsiderate builder. "*For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*" Such things do sometimes literally occur; and the folly of them is too manifest to require any proof. Such a piece of folly were men guilty of, when they began to build the tower of Babel: for, as well as the work appeared to proceed, for a time, as they counted without

\* John xii. 25.

† Rev. xii. 11.

‡ See Lecture on,

God, he confounded their language and their scheme, and scattered them abroad, so that "they left off to build." He who would build a tower, or stately house, for himself, must have a proper plan and site, and make suitable preparations, and have adequate means to carry through the work. "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterward build thine house."\* Nor are adequate means for persevering less necessary for those who enter on a religious profession. If they fail, and become apostates, the world, the very persons who contributed to their failure, will triumph over them, and mock them.† The pious will not mock them; but they will pity them, and grieve over them. And they themselves will soon feel, and bitterly lament, the consequences of their folly. The state of such backsliders becomes worse than ever. "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Let us think well, then, of this great building, so to speak, which we have to rear for eternity; let us understand the plan well, and lay our account with the cost. Let us be careful to rest it on the solid foundation, even that which is laid in Zion; for, other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ. Let us see to it, also, that we form the superstructure of good materials—the gold, silver, and precious stones of holiness. Let us remember that we have not sufficient to finish the building of ourselves; and let us, therefore, look for our sufficiency to God, and depend on our Lord's strength, who hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." But, with his assistance, "the head-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

As the first parable points out, chiefly, the *folly* of an in-

\* Prov. xxiv. 27.

† Plato (Repub. x.) compares pretenders to moral worth to those who set out briskly in a race, but soon flag, and retire with shame; and goes on to recommend very serious and deliberate consideration. Epictetus employs the 15th chapter of his 3d book in recommending the most careful weighing of the difficulties, before assuming the character of a philosopher, lest the result should be a disgraceful failure.

considerate profession of religion; so the second, or the parable of the king going to make war, points out chiefly its danger. "*Or, what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace.*" Solomon\* thus instructs and exhorts: "Every purpose is established by counsel; and with good advice make war."—"Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame." A prudent king would not go to war without the likely means, and some prospect of success. If he were conscious that a contest would be vain, he would endeavour to obtain the best terms of peace he could. Did this parable stand by itself, it might be understood to show the danger of contending with God; but its connexion proves the purport of it to be to show the danger of engaging rashly in the Christian warfare. Discipleship implies a state of war with sin, Satan, and the world. Now, though our case is quite different from that supposed in this parable, in respect of its being absolutely necessary for our safety that we should not decline this contest, whereas, no such necessity lies on a king, in all circumstances, to engage in war; yet, it is quite similar, in respect of its being a great and difficult struggle, which needs to be well considered at its commencement, that we may be prepared to bear its hardships, and to fight the good fight of faith, so as to lay hold on eternal life. We are undone, if we do not engage in this holy war; and we are undone, if we engage in it, and do not carry it on to a successful issue, nay, we are then worse than if we had never engaged in it at all, as those who are overcome because of their unskilfulness, or feebleness, or cowardice, are more bitterly taunted, and more cruelly oppressed by their conquerors, than if they had never made any resistance. Let us be fully aware, then, of the nature and severity of this contest. Let us sit down and consult. Let us not mistake as to the weapons we are to employ, the alliances we are to form, the resources on which we are to draw, or the strength on which we are to depend for success. Let us feel that we are utterly unable to meet those who are coming against us, in our own skill or strength; and let us, therefore, put ourselves under the command of Jesus Christ, as the Captain

\* Prov. xx. 18, xxv. 8.

of our salvation. Let us take unto ourselves the whole armour of God, especially the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Having once drawn this sword, let us throw away the scabbard; and let us fight much on our knees, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, as knowing that the battle is not ours, but God's. If we begin and persevere in this manner, we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us, and, at the close of the war, shall sing, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our Lord sums up this topic in the 33d verse. "*So likewise,*" or rather, "*Likewise, therefore,*"\* in which connecting particles he is to be considered as drawing an inference from the whole of what he has said from the 26th verse, "*Likewise, therefore, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*" As if he had said, As every wise builder, before he begins to build, and every wise king before he goes to war, considers well; so, it is for you, who, by your attendance on me, in this way, give some signs of a desire to become my disciples indeed, to consider well also—to consider what discipleship implies, and what sacrifices it requires, lest the unexpected occurrence of trials and losses cause you to draw back. We are by no means to consider Christ as here enjoining, or encouraging, the needless and voluntary literal renunciation of the business, society, and possessions of this life. Every thing of that kind is unauthorized, and argues a superstitious and self-righteous spirit. But he here asserts the necessity, for all his true disciples, in every age, to be prepared to part with every thing for his sake, when duty calls. As applicable more immediately to those to whom he spoke at the time, his words intimated what soon took place, that many of his disciples should be actually stripped of all they had by their persecutors, and still remain faithful; and that some, who could not endure that trial, should thereby be proved to be hypocrites. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world," said Paul. Though professing Christians are now but rarely tried by open persecution, they are still all tried, in this respect, in some degree. They must reject tempting opportunities of getting unlawful gain; and they must forego sinful pleasures, and break off hurtful intimacies. We must possess,

\* Οὕτως οὖν.

and exhibit, according to circumstances, the spirit and courage of confessors, trusting that, if we are called to heavier sacrifices, the Lord will enable us to make them. Even now, we must so forsake all that we have, as to be weaned from it in our supreme affection, which must be placed on our God and Saviour, and things spiritual and eternal. If we have not attained already to this, we are not Christ's disciples, we have no true religion. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," writes John. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And then, we must forsake, in our hearts, all that we have, so as to dedicate it to the glory of God, and the good of men, while we are in life; and so as willingly to leave it behind us, when we die. In short, a decided and habitual preference of Christ and of holiness to every thing else is absolutely necessary to our being Christians; and this should be considered well by all who profess to wish to become so.

The comparison with which this chapter concludes was employed by our Lord, in a somewhat similar way, in his sermon on the mount.\* Its connexion here with what goes before is quite natural, as it very aptly represents the uselessness of a hollow and temporary profession. "*Salt is good*:" it is both useful and pleasant;—its employment to prevent food from corrupting, and to give it an agreeable taste, is well known. Salt was always employed in the sacrifices; for, the law said, "Every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt: neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt."† To bring out the meaning fully, we must here consider our Lord as signifying what he expressly stated in his sermon on the mount, when he said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." True Christians are like salt, inasmuch as, by their doctrine, conversation, labours, example, and prayers, they contribute, under God, to preserve society from total moral corruption, and even to season it with true piety. "Thanks be unto God," says Paul, "who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." This is true of Christian preachers especially, but also of all who speak and act as Christians, in their own proper sphere.

\* Matt. v. 13.

† Lev. ii. 13.

*"But,"* says our Lord, *"if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned."* If such a thing were to happen, say some, as that salt should lose its virtue, and become insipid, how could it be rendered good again? Now, it is true, that no real Christian will ever entirely lose grace: all of them, indeed, would, if they were not preserved by a higher power than their own; but, they are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." With regard to those persons who are spoken of in Scripture as entirely falling away after a great profession, we have intimation that there was something radically defective in them at first: they "had no root in themselves;" "they went out from us, but they were not of us." It frequently happens, however, that persons who profess, and are believed by their fellow-creatures, to be favourable to religion, lose all relish for it, and become opposed to it. Such persons, instead of being useful, are then more than commonly injurious, to the cause of religion in the world, as they propagate their erroneous opinions, and diffuse the contagion of their profanity. Perhaps, some of the worst and most hurtful men are those who have overcome the scruples of a conscience which, at one time, seemed to be awakened, and have broken off from the society of the pious. Conscience, so awfully violated, becomes peculiarly callous; and the very knowledge of the better way which they have acquired, puts it in their power to do the more mischief. But, though some backsliders may not be so very hurtful to others, the conduct of all of them is at least indescribably dangerous for themselves: for, their recovery to any thing like right feeling, and especially their thorough conversion, then become most difficult and improbable, and almost impossible. "If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" If the truth cannot change them, what else can? If the gospel has proved ineffectual to secure them to God, what else can be tried? or how can the gospel be expected to be more successful than before? In the words of Paul to the Hebrews, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."—"For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon

it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." How dangerous their situation, who are fit for nothing but destruction, like salt, which, having lost all its virtue, is neither fit for manure nor any other purpose, but to be cast out as worthless! "*It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill.*" When salt exists in a soil, in great quantity, it produces, and is therefore an emblem of, sterility. (Judg. ix. 45; Jer. xvii. 6.) But, where it naturally exists, or is artificially applied, in small quantity, it is a good manure.

The parallel passage in Mark ix. 49, runs thus: "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith shall ye season it?" In the sermon on the mount, it is said, that the salt which has lost its savour "is good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." On the natural circumstances alluded to in this statement, as recorded by the three evangelists, what follows seems to throw some light, and is, at least, possessed of some interest, if it be not altogether satisfactory. In proof that it is possible for salt of a certain kind in Judea, to lose its saltness, there is the following passage from a celebrated traveller, describing the Valley of Salt. "Along, on the side of the valley, towards Gibul, there is a small precipice, about two men's length, occasioned by the continual taking away of the salt; and in this you may see how the veins of it lie. I broke a piece of it, of which that part which was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savour; the inner part which was connected to the rock, retained its savour, as I found by proof."\* There is another opinion different from this, though not inconsistent with it, which some interpreters are disposed to adopt, and which one learned critic† labours at great length, and with considerable success, to establish; it is to the following effect: The Jews, though not always, yet generally, used, in their circumstances, a kind of salt, which was not common salt, either sea or rock, for that never loses its taste, and has hardly any smell to lose, but a bituminous salt, called salt of Sodom, generated at the Lake Asphaltites, or Salt Sea. The law positively required salt of some kind

\* Maundrell's Travels, *ad finem*.

† Schoettgenius, *Horæ Hebraicæ*; Dr A. Clarke.



to be used in the sacrifices, and this particular kind was used, because it aided combustion, and emitted an agreeable odour. For this purpose, it was stored up in a particular apartment of the temple, called the Conclave of Salt. If much and long exposed, however, it was apt to lose its odour, and thus to be less fit for the sacrifices. In this case it was sometimes sprinkled on the pavement of the temple instead of sand, and would then be literally trodden under men's feet.

And now, as Jesus said to the multitude, so say we to you, in a review of the whole of this passage: "*He that hath ears to hear,\* let him hear.*" Let every one of you hear for himself—hear seriously, prayerfully, practically. No doubt, many of those who came out to hear Christ would feel disappointed, when, instead of being flattered with prospects of wealth and ease, they were told of sacrifices and crosses. But, Christ was faithful, whether they were pleased or displeased; and he was kind too, knowing what was calculated to promote their real good. But, in what he said to them, he is still speaking to you. He speaks to those of you who are in danger of losing your souls, through worldly connexions and worldly possessions: and he beseeches you to be more wise for yourselves. He admonishes those of you who think it possible to retain the favour of the world, and his favour, at once. Know, therefore, that you cannot serve God and mammon, and that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. He expostulates with those of you who are willing to go a certain length, and to forsake some things, for him; but who wish to retain your favourite sins, and chosen idols, and will not forsake all for him. If, when he is calling on you to forsake all, you are studying to forsake as little as possible, and to cleave as much to the world and sin as you think at all decent, you may be sure that you are not his disciples; you are, at the best, halting between two opinions; and, if you continue in that state, he will disown you. And he especially, and very fully, expostulates with those of you who are inconsiderate, and rash, who do not think closely on what a religious life is, who do not consult, and who do not count the cost. Be not of those professors, of whom the Lord says, "Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." The Israelites in the time of Joshua, were quite ready to say: "All that

\* "He that hath ears," &c. "Habeo aures: loquere quod vis."—*Plautus, Mil. Glor.*

the Lord commandeth us we will do," without properly considering the difficulty of faithfully serving a holy and jealous God. Aim at full light, then, and remember the necessity of stability. If you be unstable as water, you cannot excel; seek, therefore, that your hearts may be right with God, and see that you be stedfast in his covenant.

But here a word of caution is proper, lest the considerations now advanced, which are intended to urge you forward in the prosecution of salvation, should be misconstrued into a discouragement. Why this description of the difficulties in the way, but to rouse you to exert yourselves to overcome them? Why this exposition of the dangers, but to call forth your courage to brave them? The necessity of counting the cost is stated, not to keep you from building, but to lead you to build so that you may be able to finish. Consultation is required, not to deter you from the war, but to enable you to engage in it with the certainty of success. Satan shows the best side of his cause, and conceals the worst, for he knows that a full explanation would prevent his success with you. But, the Lord Jesus Christ tells you the worst side of his, as well as the best, without a particle of concealment, knowing that he may safely trust a sensible man with the decision, if he can only be brought fairly to examine both sides. He wishes you, indeed, to count the cost; but then, he also shows you, and invites you to count the vast ultimate advantages. "Every one," saith he, "that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and inherit everlasting life." But why speak of counting the advantage? You cannot count it. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him." Let none of you, then, be discouraged. On the contrary, let every one of you be stirred up to make an entire surrender of yourselves to the Saviour, and to follow him fully.

Believers, who are on the whole stedfast in your profession!—you have counted the cost, but you do not think it too much. You do not repent of any sacrifices which duty has required you to make. You do not grudge any labour you have taken on the spiritual building, or any hardships you have endured in this holy struggle. On the contrary, even the present enjoyments greatly overbalance the present

troubles of the course you have chosen. Go on, then, steadily, and be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. "See that you lose not the things which you have wrought, but receive a full reward." In the meantime, remember that you are the salt of the earth. That you may answer this honourable and useful purpose, "Have salt in yourselves;"—"let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt;" and do all you can to prevent the progress of sin, and to promote the cause of religion in society. Thus shall you fulfil the chief end of your being on earth, and, in due time, pass into the abodes of perfect purity, and endless peace.

## LECTURE LXXX.

## LUKE XV. 1-10.

“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. 2. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. 3. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 4. What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7. I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. 8. ¶ Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? 9. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10. Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

WE read, in the concluding part of the preceding chapter, that a great multitude went with Christ; and, in the opening of this chapter, we are told that “*all the publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him*.”—and so it is generally seen, that where the gospel is faithfully preached, thither multitudes of people resort, and among these many of the most ungodly. There are, indeed, exceptions to this rule; for, some intentionally shun opportunities of hearing the truth as it is in Jesus, and some when they hear it, are so offended, as to withdraw beyond its reach. It is also true that some teachers draw crowds by the attraction of novelty, or of extravagance; while some, who are sober and sound, excite but little attention. For the most part, however, where there is a fair and full opportunity of judging, those ministrations are most sought after, which lay the axe most vigorously to the root of the tree, in the unflinching exhibition of the great doctrines and holy precepts of the Gospel. But, how is this to be accounted for, consistently with man’s natural depravity, and dislike of what is good? Might it

not be expected, that, the purer the doctrine, the more repulsive it would become to them, and that most of them would be found where there was least of the light to expose, and of the truth to disturb them? The exemplifications of the dislike of the truth already noticed, in connexion with the consideration that the resort of those who know the truth to those who proclaim it is what must be expected, account, to some extent, for what actually happens, but are not sufficient to account for it fully. Let it be remarked, then, in addition, that the undisguised and unadulterated glorious gospel of the grace of God approves itself, in some degree, to the conscience, and is exactly suitable to the wants, of the somewhat impressed, though unpardoned and unrenewed; and also, that, independently on the consideration of its truth and of its personal reception, it is, in itself, a system far finer and more touching, and more sublime, and much better calculated to call forth the energies of those who proclaim it, and to interest and agitate the minds of those who hear it, than any of those comparatively dull and vapid human representations, which are, in a great measure, stripped of what is peculiarly evangelical. It is plain, too, that those persons (for so strange and inconsistent a being is man, that there are such) who are at once conscious of wilful and habitual iniquity, and hopeful that they may yet turn to God and be forgiven—it is plain that such persons must feel, that if there be any hope for them at all, it is according to the scheme which shows grace abounding to the chief of sinners. These considerations, taken together, may sufficiently account for the fact of multitudes, not excepting some of the worst of characters, flocking to hear the gospel.

Surely the actual attendance of multitudes on the preaching of the gospel, however great sinners some of them may be, though not enough in itself, is desirable, and in so far well, as it at least brings them within the reach of the means which are adapted, under God, to convert and save them. Yet, this promiscuous resort of multitudes to the preaching of the truth, and this proclamation of mercy to the chief of sinners, have always been offensive to pharisaical and self-righteous formalists. Thus it was on the occasion here described. The publicans, or tax-gatherers, being set over the Jews by the Roman governors, were, of course, very obnoxious on that account; and they appear to have been generally oppressive in their exactions. These

persons, however, as well as others who were known to be irreligious and immoral, now drew near to Christ, to hear him: and it is to be gathered from what follows, that he now, not only willingly taught them, but condescended to sit down with some of them to meat.

"*And the Pharisees and scribes,*" of whom we have had frequent occasion to speak, "*murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, or gives them access into his presence, and eateth with them.*" The force of this objection lay in the assumption that his acting in that manner arose from insensibility to the evil of sin, and tended to encourage transgressors in their evil ways; whereas, the very reverse of this was the truth, his conduct being directed by compassion for their perishing souls, and a desire for their conversion. We found scribes and Pharisees making the same objection, when Jesus and his disciples were at the feast in the house of Levi, or Matthew, the publican.\* "Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" To this he made the most satisfactory reply, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Objectors of the same classes were here angry that sinners of every description were welcomed by Christ, and they spoke of this as a reflection on his character. This was a prejudiced and an erroneous application of the principle that men are known by the company they keep—a principle which can only apply when they voluntarily and habitually associate with persons with whom they are pleased in their present state. It is no proof, surely, that a teacher is himself ignorant, that he teaches the ignorant, or, that a physician is himself sick, that he visits and prescribes for the sick: as little ground was there for objecting to our Lord in this case. Nay, what his enemies wished to turn against him, was one of the finest and most engaging traits of his character. Besides, granting that many of those whom Jesus received for this benevolent purpose were as bad as could easily be supposed, what were those objectors themselves? were these Pharisees and scribes so very good people as to be entitled thus to interfere? Let the character drawn of them, on various occasions, by the faithful and true Witness, and habitually exemplified by them, answer the question:—that character was a compound of selfishness, pride, and hypocrisy; and so in general, when narrowly examined, will be

\* Luke v. 30. See Lecture on.

found to be the character of those who murmur at the gospel invitation being addressed freely to sinners of every degree. They trust, vainly trust, in themselves, that they are righteous, and therefore it is that they despise others, and would restrain the grace of God.

This objection being made, our Lord proceeds to answer it very fully in the three parables contained in this interesting chapter, which were admirably calculated to rebuke the uncharitable and censorious Pharisees, and to encourage the poor and self-convicted sinners who heard him at the time, and which are equally calculated to serve the same important purposes at the present moment. The first parable is that of the *lost sheep*.

The literal sense of this parable, is, like that of many others, too plain to require any illustration, being a very natural description of the way in which a shepherd, or an owner of a flock, would feel and act in the circumstances supposed. The full complement of the "*hundred sheep*," is here put spiritually, for all the elect of God. If we embrace the whole that Scripture teaches on this subject, we must believe that all these are in a certain sense Christ's sheep, even before they are brought into his fold—that is, before they are actually converted and saved: for, being chosen of the Father from eternity, they are given by him to the Son, to be redeemed by his blood, as well as to be actually called by his grace. Though of infinite value, and, of course, of sufficient value for the whole human race, his atonement was yet in a peculiar sense—that is, expressly, intentionally, and efficaciously—for his sheep, of whatever nation or character they may be; that is, for those who, being divinely chosen, are given to him, as already said, to be saved from wrath, and brought home to God, and who, as the result shows, do therefore believe and obey the gospel. Hence it is that we are taught, in Scripture language, both that Christ "died for all," and also that "he gave his life for the sheep"—for those who, in the same chapter\* are described, partly, as not yet of his fold, and partly, as hearing his voice and following him, but all as given to him by his Father, and certainly to obtain eternal life. "I lay down my life for the sheep," says he. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." If it be inquired why, seeing the atonement is of sufficient

\* John x. 11, &c.

value for all, all are not saved; Christ himself replies, "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life." Many voluntarily, sinfully, and obstinately, refuse to come to him, and therefore, the blame of their ruin rests solely with themselves. If it be inquired, again, why those who are saved are saved, and who makes them to differ, he replies, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain;" and Paul also replies, to the same purpose, God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;" and, therefore, the whole glory of their salvation is due to God.

But to proceed: By the lost sheep, our Lord here seems to point to every elect sinner before his conversion, though the metaphor will also apply to the believer as subject to occasional wanderings. This comparison is used in other places of Scripture. Thus, in the last verse of the 119th Psalm—"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant:" in the 53d chapter of Isaiah—"All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way:" and, in the last verse of the 2d chapter of the First Epistle of Peter—"For ye were as sheep going astray: but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop," or overseer, "of your souls." There is, also, another parable very similar to this, which may be considered as illustrative of it. It is in the 18th chapter of Matthew, from the 10th verse, and is as follows: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Now, is not a lost sheep an apt emblem of the sinner in his natural state? Sinners, going on in sin, are lost to God, who derives not from them the revenue of glory which is his due. They are lost to the Church, which is not bene-



fited by them: and they are lost to themselves—to their own true honour, interest, and happiness. They are lost to safety—they are exposed to the most imminent danger of being destroyed, like a strayed sheep, which is liable to be devoured by wild beasts. And as a lost sheep is said to be very unlikely to find its way back, so they would never return to God, but would continue to wander farther and farther away from him for ever.

If a man miss one of his sheep, he will leave the ninety and nine, the remainder of the flock, "*in the wilderness.*" The Jews called uncultivated ground, which was used only for pasture, wilderness, or desert, as distinguished from that which was ploughed and sown and inclosed.\* A man would leave his flock in their usual pasture, where they were comparatively safe, and would go after the lost sheep, till he found it. In like manner, the Son of man came to seek and to save lost sinners. For this merciful purpose, he left the glorious company of heaven, came into this world, and laid down "his life a ransom for many." The sword of Jehovah's justice awoke against the man who is God's Fellow and Shepherd, and smote him; so that, though the sheep were scattered at the time, God turned his hand upon the little ones, to shelter and save them. The chief Shepherd was most assiduous, during his stay on earth, in going after lost sheep, to bring them in by his preaching and gracious invitations: and, he is still following them, in the ministrations of his under shepherds, the dispensations of his providence, and the influences of his Spirit, in order to bring them home to himself. He has already found and brought home multitudes, but, as long as there shall be one of his sheep away from the flock, he will never desist from the search.

When a man has found his lost sheep, he brings it home with the greatest care and tenderness: and if necessary, he even takes it up and carries it. Now, this figure is employed to shadow forth the care and tenderness shown to men by their God and Saviour, both on their conversion, and in their subsequent treatment. "In his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old."—"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." He removes the convert from the barren and dangerous mountains of distance from God

\* Matt. iii. 1; Mark vi. 31.

and of this world's vanity, and introduces him into the true Church, and to the enjoyment of its safety and all its other privileges.

In such a recovery of strayed property, a man rejoices. So the blessed Redeemer finds great delight in the recovery of a lost soul. This success in prospect, was his solace in the midst of his sufferings: "For the joy that was set before him" (and this was the joy, in part), "he endured the cross, despising the shame." And this success, actually beheld, appears to be one of the sources of his peculiar enjoyment as Mediator. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." How beautiful the words of Zephaniah: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

In the case here supposed, too, the man would expect his friends and neighbours to be glad, as well as himself; and in fact, those who took an interest in his affairs would participate in his joy. Thus it is, that Jesus expects all who know and love him, and take an interest in his cause, to rejoice with him, on the recovery of a soul. There is, indeed, great reason to rejoice in such an event; for thus, God is glorified, the Saviour is exalted, and a sinner is rescued from condemnation, pollution, infamy, and misery, and brought into a state of acceptance, sanctification, and life.

But, the joy for such an event of grace is not confined to believers on earth. "*I say unto you,*" adds our Lord, "*that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.*" God the Father takes pleasure in such an event, and declares his satisfaction in it—God who has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he turn from his wickedness, and live. We have already noticed the pleasure it gives to the Son of God. It would seem, from this general declaration, that the glorified saints are, at least, frequently, made acquainted, by some means, with such events, and always derive an accession of joy from the intelligence. As for the holy angels, their joy, in such cases, is expressly asserted in the next parable. Nay, we are even taught that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, "*more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repent-*

ance." The persons who need no repentance, may possibly signify those who imagine they need none, those who are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness: and, thus, our Lord is to be considered as declaring, that the conversion of a notorious offender, or of any sinner, is far more worthy of being rejoiced in, than the proud formality of such self-deceivers; as the sighing of the publican is represented, in another parable, to have been more acceptable to God than the boasting of the Pharisee. But, by those "who need no repentance," are probably here rather to be understood, those who, having been already savingly enlightened, pardoned, and converted, do not need to undergo, and, strictly speaking, cannot undergo, that great radical change a second time. Repentance should be the believer's daily work, inasmuch as he is still guilty of sin, more or less; but, having once become truly penitent, he never falls back into a state of absolute impenitence, and therefore, cannot need repentance, in the strongest sense of the word here employed, which is a change of mind. "If I wash thee not," said Christ,\* "thou hast no part with me:" but "he that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet." Our Lord teaches that the repentance, the thorough change of mind, of one sinner, occasions more joy in heaven than the stability of many who are already obedient. Not that those who have been long pious, may not, probably, have been more useful, and have attained to higher excellence, than the new convert; but, it is well known, that any very recent happy event, especially if unexpected, occasions more sensible joy, and is more particularly marked, for a time, than even more important advantages with which we have long been familiar. Thus, the restoration from a dangerous sickness, of one member of a family, occasions more joy in a house, at the time, than the continued health of all the rest, however great the latter blessing may be, and however sensible they ought to be of it. The conversion of a sinner is the great turning point of his history, and must always be considered as cause of great and immediate joy.

Such is the parable of the lost sheep; and surely, it is very pertinent to the purposes for which it was introduced, namely, to rebuke the uncharitable and censorious, and to encourage poor and self-convicted sinners. For the same general purposes, though with some interesting peculiarities, our Lord spoke the second parable, or that of the *lost piece*

\* John xiii. 8, 10.

*of silver.* Following the other parable, as it does immediately, and corresponding so closely with it in several points, its explanation may be very brief. The "*piece of silver*" here mentioned, is the *drachma*, which, some say, corresponded to the *denarius*, or Roman penny, and was a small coin, in value about seven pence halfpenny of our money. A woman who had but "*ten*" of these would make every search to find one of them when lost, and when she had found it, would expect her neighbours to feel and express satisfaction on the occasion. This is another comparison, to show Christ's desire to save sinners, and the joy which their salvation occasions. The soul is, indeed, more precious than silver, yet its safety is not necessary to the riches of the Eternal Word; for he would have continued infinitely glorious, though men had been all lost for ever: hence the care he manifests for our salvation is the more wonderful. The lighting of the candle, and the sweeping of the house, represent all that he did and suffered, and all that he is still doing, for our salvation: and all this labour and searching are necessary, only because of our blindness, guilt, and waywardness. "He lights the candle of the gospel, not to show him the way to us, but to show us the way to him."\* Not one of those who are his property shall be ultimately lost. They shall all be found, and separated from the rubbish, and preserved in his treasury. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Here, too, the joy is again asserted which such conversion occasions: and, on so delightful a theme, repetition cannot be tedious. "*Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*" The holy angels are represented, in Scripture, as taking a deep interest in the work of redemption throughout. They rejoiced to announce the birth of the Saviour, and to ascribe, in reference to that event, glory to God in the highest, in connexion with peace on earth, and good-will to men. Of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, and the effects produced by the preaching of the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, it is said, "Which things the angels desire to look into." And the success of this work in the conversion, which is always followed at last by the glorification, of a soul, we are here assured, excites their liveliest joy. In

\* Henry.

short, there is a close connexion between the visible and invisible worlds, so that we may say, all hell triumphs in the condemnation, and all heaven triumphs in the salvation, of a sinner.

Among many reflections, this passage suggests the following:—

1. *How admirable the grace and condescension of the Lord Jesus, in seeking and restoring the lost!* If he did not seek us, we would never seek him. But, blessed be his name for his spontaneous mercy, persevering search, and matchless care and tenderness, here so beautifully delineated! How kindly he invites, how sweetly he constrains us, to come home to himself, and to happiness! How concerned is he both to find and bring us home at first, and also, to find and bring us back from our occasional subsequent wanderings! Though applicable more directly to converted Jews, the words of Jehovah by Ezekiel\* are applicable in spirit to converts of all nations and ages. “For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock, in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”—“I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.”—“And, I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David, he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them: I the Lord have spoken it.”

2. *How anxious ought we all to be for the salvation of our own souls!* The indifference of most men to their own salvation is truly astonishing, and can only arise from wilful, sinful, and awful blindness. Do men manifest such anxiety to recover a lost sheep, or a lost piece of silver, or any other trifle of property; and shall we not be concerned for the recovery of our precious and immortal souls? Let us mark the importance attached to their recovery by those whom we must acknowledge to be the very best judges, namely, the saints and angels, and God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: and let us esteem every care light, which may, in any way, promote our everlasting welfare.

3. *How beautifully and strongly are Christians, and*

Ezek. xxxiv. 11.

*especially Christian ministers, here directed and encouraged to labour to reclaim even the worst of men!* Jesus Christ himself acted in this way; he defended his conduct in doing so, in these two parables; and he has herein set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Let us attend to all classes of persons; but, let us pay more than ordinary attention to those who most need it. Let us not dismiss them unceremoniously, nor treat them harshly; but, let us receive them, and address them, though faithfully, yet kindly, when they come to us; and let us even go to seek them, and follow after them, for their good. We may fail with many, and even with most of them; but we shall not fail with them all: and if even one sinner be gained, that one will be more than a recompense for all our endeavours.

4. *How greatly should we rejoice in the recovering of a soul to God!* If there is joy, on this account, even in heaven, where God himself is visibly present—if even the blissful vision of God does not so absorb the souls of saints and angels, as to render them insensible to the importance of such an event; surely, when we witness, or hear of such a thing, there should be joy among us on earth. When Barnabas “saw the grace of God” at Antioch, “he was glad.” When Paul and Barnabas “passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, they caused great joy unto all the brethren.” So let it be with us.

In the last place, *How affectionately are impenitent sinners here admonished to consider their lost state by nature, and encouraged to return to God, through the Redeemer, for forgiveness and safety!* As the Saviour acted towards the sinners of Galilee and Judea of old, so he is still ready to act towards the sinners who have now come out to hear his word. He is ready to receive, to teach, to pity, and to save them. Is there, then, one now present, who feels himself like a lost sheep on a barren and dreary mountain, or like a lost piece of silver that has fallen and rolled away, and is lying hid in a corner? let him be humbled, but let him also be encouraged. Let him bethink himself, and begin to act wisely. Let him turn his steps homeward, towards the fold: let him come forth from his dismal hiding-place, and cast himself at the Saviour’s feet. So, from having been the plague and the grief, he shall become the delight of the godly, nay, he shall become the beloved of the Lord, and the joy of heaven—he shall be happy with Christ’s flock now, and form part of his choicest treasure for ever.

## LECTURE LXXXI.

LUKE XV. 11-32.

“And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18. I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry. 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. 29. And he, answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”

THE parable of the *prodigal son* is the king of parables. However beautiful any of the rest of them may be, this, by general consent, is more beautiful than they all. It is wonderfully adapted to call forth the sympathies of human

nature, even in its unconverted state; and it strikes chords which awaken into strong vibration every string of the renewed heart. While it is calculated to revive the penitential sorrow, to allay the returning fears, to confirm the filial devotedness, and to excite the grateful praise of believers, it has ever been, and it will ever continue to be, through divine grace, a signally blessed and effectual encouragement to sinners to return, through a compassionate Saviour, to the arms of a forgiving God. It is only to be found in Luke; and had he given us nothing new but this, his Gospel would have been a great acquisition to the Church and to the world. It is at once so plain, and so profound, so simple, and so dignified—its appeal to the understanding is so strong, and to the affections is so touching—the truths which it is intended to inculcate are brought out so fully, and the manner in which they are put together, and the very language in which they are clothed, are so finished, and so exquisite, that one is afraid to obtrude any remarks on it, lest the counsel it contains should be darkened by words without knowledge, and its inimitable fineness injured by the unskilful touch. Even now, it seemed as if the mere reading of this parable were enough, and as if the meetest procedure would be to shut the book, and say no more; for, indeed, what can be said, or what can be conceived, at all comparable to the text? Yet, such a procedure would be deemed strange, and unsatisfactory. Without seeking, then, to gild gold, or pretending to illuminate the sun, let us fix our attention, for some time, on the riches and glory of these the Redeemer's own words, in the earnest desire that the Holy Spirit may bless them for our good, whether we be yet in a state of distance and disobedience, or be already returned to our Father's house.

This parable was evidently spoken by our Lord, with the same general design as the two preceding parables of the lost sheep, and the lost piece of silver, namely, to obviate the objection raised against him, by the Pharisees and scribes, who, on seeing the publicans and sinners coming to hear him, said, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them:" and, whereas those were founded on comparisons drawn from the ordinary feelings and conduct of human beings in the case of lost property, this is founded on a comparison drawn from the far stronger and more affecting consideration of parental feelings and conduct, in the case of a lost son.



This parable naturally divides itself into four parts, which we shall consider in their order—the prodigal's departure from his father's house—his return—the reception he meets with—and the character and conduct of the elder brother.

Let us consider, First, *The prodigal's departure from his father's house.*

"A certain man had two sons." Those who belong to the same family, and have enjoyed the same opportunities, often turn out very differently. One proves a comfort, another a grief, to his parents; for, "a wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." Grace runs not in families; for, in this respect, a house is often divided. God takes "one of a city, and two of a family, and brings them to Zion." Jacob and Esau were twin brothers; yet Jacob was a man of prayer, and, as a prince, had power with God and men, and prevailed; while Esau was a profane man, and sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage. Some children become even exceedingly profligate, while others are quite steady: and among those who are steady, there is much diversity, some being merely decent and inoffensive, while others are eminently dutiful and kind. So, in the case supposed in this parable, the two sons are represented as being of very opposite habits.

"The younger of them said to his father, *Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.*" There are some who consider this demand so strange, and the father's compliance with it, abused as the compliance was likely to be, so much stranger still, that the supposition can only appear natural, when there is taken into view the custom, which prevailed in Eastern countries, of children claiming their share of their father's property during his life-time, which, it appears, they were legally entitled to do, and with which demand, of course, the father could not refuse to comply.\* The intention of this law was to protect children against harsh usage from their parents; but, it was certainly very liable to abuse. The son might be unreasonable in his demand, "yet the demand must first be acceded to, before the matter could be legally inquired into; and then, if it was found that the father was irreproachable in his character, and

\* "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me"—*Δος μοι το ἰσὶ-καλλον μέρος της οὐσίας.* Herodotus (lib. iv.) says, that the men who married the Amazons, previously claimed, and obtained, from their own parents, the portion of property that fell to them, *των κτημάτων το μέρος*—*των κτημάτων το ἰσὶκαλλον*; that they might live apart from them. A similar phrase is used by Demosthenes and Aristides.

had given no just cause for the son to separate from him; in that case, the civil magistrate fined the son." \* Others, however, are of opinion, that, though the Mosaic law provided against improper partialities and dislikes on the part of a father when disposing of his property,† there is not sufficient ground for affirming that it vested any such right in children, during the life of their parents; and they therefore look on the compliance of the father, here supposed, as an instance of singular generosity, which rendered the unedifying departure and conduct of his son peculiarly base. When the father assigned his portion to the younger son, he, at the same time, assigned his portion to the elder son, according to the Jewish law, would receive a double portion. The words of the parable are, "*He divided unto them his substance.*" In doing so, he may be supposed to have reserved what was merely sufficient for himself.

The elder son is supposed not to have taken up his portion, though it was fixed and allocated, but to have allowed it to lie, and to have remained with his father. But "*not many days after*" the division, "*the younger son gathered all together*" that fell to his share, "*and took his journey into a far country.*" Under whatever specious pretexts he may have endeavoured to veil his conduct, there can be no doubt that the true reasons for it were very bad; such as, dislike to the quietness of the domestic circle, impatience of salutary restraint, self-confidence, and a desire to gratify his foolish and sinful propensities. Removed from the eye of paternal inspection, and sojourning where he was entirely unknown, he "*wasted his substance with riotous living*"—with luxury and profligacy, in the society of the most abandoned characters. Thus, indeed, it too often happens, in fact, with the youth who gets the command of money, and leaves his parental roof. And, who can describe the wounded feelings of pious parents in such cases? Little do thoughtless youths, in the midst of their foolish and profligate career, consider the pangs they send to the hearts of those to whom, under God, they owe their being, or how they not only imbitter life to them, but shorten it, and contribute to bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

"He that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough," says the wise man.—"Be not among wine-bibbers, among riotous eaters of flesh: for, the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." The prodigal, accordingly,

\* Dr A. Clarke, quoting from the code of Gentoo laws. † Deut. xxi. 16.

soon began to feel, in this way, the consequences of his folly. His property was dissipated; and not only so, but a very grievous famine prevailed, at the same time, in the country where he was sojourning, which aggravated the straits to which his own extravagance had reduced him; so that he began to be in absolute want. Famished and wretched, however, as his condition was, he did not think of retracing his steps. He was not yet penitent; he was not yet humbled. He was too proud to confess his error. He still wished to linger in the distant land. He would do any thing, and submit to any thing, rather than return to his father. Not being able to obtain any other situation, he went and engaged himself as a servant "*to a citizen of that country,*" who, judging so despicable a being fit for nothing better, "*sent him into his fields to feed swine.*" Among the ancient Greeks, indeed, the chief swine-herd was sometimes a person of some note, as appears from what is said of Eumæus, in the *Odyssey* of Homer: but that circumstance was both uncommon, and demonstrative of a very low state of civilisation. According to Herodotus,\* the Egyptians did not allow swine-herds to join in general society, or to be present at the worship of the gods, nor would the lowest of the people form any matrimonial alliances with them. But especially must this employment have been despicable and odious in the estimation of the Jews, as swine were legally unclean animals, which, as it was absolutely forbidden to them to eat, it must have been at least disrespectful to the law to own, or to herd. This circumstance, then, appears to have been fixed on by our Lord, as suggesting to the Jewish mind the idea of the deepest worthlessness and degradation.

Poor and despicable as the employment was in itself, it was peculiarly wretched in this man's case, because of the total inadequacy of the allowance made to him for his labour. It did not afford him enough of the cheapest food of man, so that, in the cravings of his hunger, he had a strong desire to try, if indeed he did not actually try, the food of beasts—" *He would fain have filled his belly with the husks† that the swine did eat.*" Nay, so very wretched was his plight, so careful had the famine made people, so completely was he deserted by his former companions, who had courted him and shared in his gaiety, at his expense, in the

\* Herodotus, ii. 47.

† The fruit of the *charub* tree, or a kind of pulse, say some: wild chestnuts. say others. Grotius, Bochart, Drusius.

days of his plenty, and so thoroughly and so universally was he despised, that "*no man gave him*" the smallest portion of food, or of any other kind of help. Thus, our Lord supposes a case which might happen, and which, in substance, does sometimes happen, in a family, and then leaves us to make the spiritual application of it. Nor is this application difficult.

How deplorable was this prodigal's—this worthless and spendthrift son's, condition! and yet it is, though a very apt, but a faint emblem, of the state of fallen and offending man, in his departure and distance from the Lord God, his Father who created him. It would, indeed, both impair the beauty and dignity of this parable, and lead to sentiments questionable, if not erroneous, to attempt to find a close parallel for all its circumstances, some of which are, doubtless, introduced, rather to render the relation full and finished, than to be made the foundation of particular doctrines: at the same time, not only the great outline, but several of the particular features, of this case, are obviously intended to be marked in its religious application, and are too striking and important to be overlooked. Be it remembered, too, in order that none of us may endeavour to shift the humbling truth from himself to others, that this is a representation, not only of those who, in the judgment of worldly men, are uncommonly profligate and degraded, but of every fallen human being in his natural, unrenewed, and unconverted state. The situation of this youth, before he left his father's house, corresponds most closely with the situation of man before the fall, when in paradise he was happy in the love, favour, and communion of his heavenly Father, and enjoyed God in all, and all in God. It may also be considered as corresponding, in some degree, to the state of those who are again restored to the divine favour; though the comparison cannot be run exactly through the whole of the parable, on either of these two principles. Of course, men's departure from God, as here described, may properly be considered in respect both of their first fall in their covenant head, and of their own subsequent wandering disposition and conduct.

The prodigal was dissatisfied with the quiet life he had to lead at home; and so are sinners with the steady and holy demeanour which characterizes all God's dutiful children. The prodigal sighed for independence on his father; and so man sighs for independence on his God. Our first

parents were allured to transgression by the desire of being "as gods;" and every sinner still affects to think and act for himself, and to take his own way. Let us beware of this spirit: let us value the peace and good order of true piety; and let us believe that we never can be truly free or happy, but when we are living in a feeling of dependence on the Lord of all. The prodigal sought what he called his portion of goods immediately, that he might enjoy it by himself, and in a separate establishment, so to speak, from his father's; so, men are naturally inclined to seek a portion in hand, rather than a portion in reversion—a portion in this life, that they may make themselves happy with it, as their own, and not their Creator's. And, though God is not the poorer for all that he bestows, he does confer many favours on men; he gives them "life and breath, and all things," to be improved for his own glory; which gifts, however, they too often spend without him. Let us beware of this: let us seek our portion in God himself; and let us desire to enjoy it with him. Happy every one of us who can, in truth, say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."—"God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

As the prodigal left his father, so also do sinners forsake God. They break away from his favour, and from his service; they depart from him in affection and conduct. "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" They not only leave the Lord, in this sense, but wander very far away from him. They deem it happiness to be at the greatest distance from the source and centre of all true happiness; and can there be a more gross, or more fatal delusion? What is heaven, but his immediate and endless presence? What is hell, but everlasting distance and banishment from his face? "Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God." As the prodigal "wasted his substance with riotous living," so do many sinners, in their state of distance from God, give loose reins to extravagance, immorality, and profligacy. "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Their maxim

is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Or, if they are not so openly profligate, they still waste their substance, they abuse the gifts bestowed on them—they waste and abuse, by misapplying their reason, their education, their time, their property, their talents, their opportunities. Let us beware of this, both in its most offensive, and in its least scandalous forms. "Let us walk honestly" (becomingly), "as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."

As the prodigal was beset with want and famine, so, impenitent transgressors are in spiritual destitution, and are overtaken by various troubles, especially if they are ever to be reclaimed. They are in absolute poverty—they are in want of necessities for the soul—they are "wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked"—they have neither the bread of life, nor the white raiment. Let us think of this, and deprecate, more than "dungeon beggary," this miserable state of spiritual indigence. For men thus voluntarily to reduce themselves to the worst kind of poverty and misery, under pretence of seeking pleasure, is most unreasonable, as well as most sinful. This is indeed "to forsake the fountain of living waters, and to hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water."—"O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters." When the means of sinful gratification are gone, they feel a want, a void, which is most distressing; nay, they are left a prey to positive misery. For all this, too, they have to accuse themselves—which is the most bitter ingredient in the cup of their suffering. "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?"—"And now, what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts."

But, as this prodigal would not return to his father for a long time, so sinners often harden their necks when they are

reproved, and instead of turning to the Lord in their trouble, plunge deeper into depravity and spiritual degradation. Abaz, "in the time of his distress, did trespass yet more against the Lord."—"Thou hast stricken them," said Jeremiah to the Lord, concerning the impenitent Jews, "but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." Sinners, stripped of their enjoyment, and even convinced of their folly, in some degree, still have recourse to a variety of carnal expedients for relief. They voluntarily hire themselves to sin and baseness. They give themselves up to a state of slavery, far more degrading than the work to which this prodigal was set in the fields. They feed on husks. "He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart hath turned" the sinner "aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" He "feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation." In this way, sinners become worse and worse, and "give themselves over to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness." How should every rational being shudder at the idea of such depravity! In such base indulgences, or (if they are not so far gone in profligacy) in some more decent earthly pursuits, do unconverted men seek for satisfaction, but seek in vain. Husks may be food for swine, but they are not food for men. Worldly goods may feed the body, but cannot keep the soul from famishing; and, as for sin, it ruins both. God alone can "satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness." The prodigal found no man to help him in his penury; neither do sinners. The world seeks not to help them; Satan does not help them; nay, the world and Satan seek to plunge them deeper in misery, and to detain them in it for ever. Indeed, no creature can effectually help, or deliver their souls. Their afflictions, of themselves, cannot mend them; yet they are useful to them, in the hand of God, who often multiplies troubles upon them, and then, imparting the special influences of his Holy Spirit, accomplishes the work of their conversion, and, by his providence and grace united, constrains them to return to himself. "For his iniquity"—"was I wroth and smote him," saith the Lord; "I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him." But this leads us to consider,

Secondly, The prodigal's *return*. Preparatory to this, he is represented as reflecting so seriously on his conduct and situation, as to "*come to himself*;" for, he had been as one beside himself, in his career of thoughtlessness and dissipation. As soon as he was capable of thinking soberly, he contrasted, in his mind, the happy condition even of the servants of his father with the miserable condition of himself, who was his son. "*How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*" Thus reflecting, he resolved that he would remain no longer in his wretched and disgraceful condition, but, whatever might be his reception, would arise and return to his father and to his home. He resolves with himself, too, what he was to say. He was to venture to address him by the tender appellation of "*father*:" he was not to conceal, nor to extenuate his crimes, but was ingeniously and humbly to confess that he had offended grievously against the God of heaven,\* as well as against his earthly father; he was to acknowledge that he was unworthy to be called or treated as a son; and he was to implore him to make him "*as one of his hired servants*," whose work he would cheerfully do, and with whose humble place and provision he would be well contented, so be that he would only receive him back into favour, and allow him to live with him. And these good resolutions he executed without delay. "*He arose*," and set out on his long journey. He probably begged his way, and his wasted strength would hardly suffice; but Providence secured him safety and sustenance, and he at last arrived at home, and made his premeditated confession and supplication, as fully as his father's returning kindness would permit.

Now, all this most exactly and strikingly describes the steps of the sinner's conversion, or return, to God. Circumstances may vary, but the change is substantially the same. He comes to himself. Formerly "*madness was in his heart*;" and his actions were totally at variance with reason and his own interest. "*So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee*," may the returning sinner say. The sinner is brought to his "*right mind*," when the Lord works effectually on him, by the influences of his Holy Spirit, and the instrumentality of his Word and providence. When light is thus communicated, he begins to

\* *Εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν*: some are for rendering this, "*Even unto heaven*;" that is, exceedingly.



reason aright. He discovers the happiness of the people of God, of those who belong to the household of faith, and longs for its enjoyment, feeling that there is no relief for him but in the rich provision made in the gospel. He comes to a painful sense of his own guilt and misery: he perceives that, if he obtain not pardon and help, he must perish for ever. But, led by the Spirit, he does not remain in this dismal condition. He resolves, and he executes the resolution, to go to God, his heavenly Father. He comes to him mentally, by faith in the name and righteousness of the Redeemer. "Now, in Christ Jesus," says Paul to the Ephesians, "ye who once were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." He comes, not hiding, but disclosing, his guilt. He comes, saying, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." He is ashamed to come in so deplorably destitute a condition; but he despairs of ever being better, if he stay away; and therefore, he comes, at once, just as he is. He comes, enlarging on his unworthiness, and deeply grieving over it. He feels and confesses himself totally unworthy of the least favour, and still more of the honour and privileges of a son. Yet, he cannot but plead that he may not be entirely rejected. He feels that the meanest of the saints, whom he once despised, are more honourable and more happy than he. He desires to become as a hired servant, if he cannot be as a son. He would rather be "a hewer of wood, or a drawer of water, for the congregation and altar of the Lord," than hold the highest office without God's favour. He would rather be a door-keeper in the Lord's house, than dwell gaily in the tents of wickedness. He confesses that the smallest favour would be more than he deserves: yea, he pleads earnestly for mercy and for some place in his Father's house. This spirit and language become even those who have been long blessed in God, and who are comparatively eminent in his service. Jacob said, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant:" and the Centurion, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof:" and Paul, "I am the least of the apostles, and am not meet to be called an apostle." Surely, then, this spirit and language especially become, as they do in fact characterize, the sinner,

on his first turning from sin to God. Happy are all they who thus apply to the fountain of mercy. Those who thus come unto God through Christ, he will in no wise cast out.

This would lead on to the consideration of the third part of the parable, namely, the prodigal's reception on his return; but this must be deferred till it please God to give us another opportunity. Meanwhile, the two points we have considered are most important, and demand our serious and immediate and practical attention. Let us think of our departure from God, and of the necessity of our returning to him. Let the sinner break through all the unlawful engagements he has formed with sin, Satan, and the world, and let him come, as he is, to the Lord, through the Redeemer. Let him come even now: let him not wait for a more convenient season, lest it should never arrive. And, let the believer look back on the escape he has made from the snare of the devil, from spiritual degradation, slavery, famine, and ruin—let him look back with gratitude for his deliverance. Let him be daily returning to God, in the exercise of faith and repentance; and let him be ever studying to maintain the views, temper, affections, language, and conduct, becoming every one who has the honour and happiness to belong to our heavenly Father's adopted and regenerated family.

## LECTURE LXXXII.

LUKE XV. 11-32.

## THE PRODIGAL SON—CONTINUED.

HAVING formerly considered the prodigal's departure from his father's house, and his return to it, let us now proceed to consider,

III. His *reception* on his return.

Let us suppose that his long journey homewards was nearly finished, and that he was thus thinking with himself how his father would receive him: "Will he refuse to see me? Will he dismiss me for ever from his presence? Will he overwhelm me with reproaches, and punish me? Or will he have pity on me, and restore me to favour?" While his mind was thus vibrating between fear and hope, and while he was yet at a considerable distance, his father, who had all along grieved over his absence, and longed for his return, looking out in the direction whence he was coming, saw him, and sadly altered as was his appearance by the scenes both of profligacy and of penury through which he had passed, and different from the splendour in which he left him and rode away, as was the sorry figure he now made, as dejected, and weary, and ashamed, he returned, walking, in rags, and without shoes to his feet; his father immediately knew him, and "*had compassion*" on him, and, forgetting the provocation he had given him, and kindly laying aside the dignity which usually marked his years and station, made haste to meet him, "*and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him,*" leaning over him with a most affectionate embrace. Similar to this, in some circumstances, was the meeting of Jacob and Esau: \* Jacob "bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." So also, "Joseph fell upon his brother Benjamin's

\* Gen. xxxiii. 3, xlv. 14.

neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them."

After having received this affecting proof of his father's forgiveness and love, the prodigal began to make his humble premeditated acknowledgment, and said, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*" You observe that part of what he intended to say, namely, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," is here wanting. In some manuscripts that clause is supplied, the transcribers, no doubt, thinking that its insertion was necessary to make the one part of the parable consistent with the other: in that way, however, a great beauty is lost in overlooking the consideration that the overflowing tenderness of his father did not leave time for the prodigal son to say all he intended, but interrupted him in the most gracious manner.

While the prodigal was in the act of making his penitential confession, his father turned to the servants, who had now gathered around, and said to them, first of all, "*Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.*" The robe\* here mentioned, was probably a species of dress which servants did not wear; and, therefore, this order was a declaration that his father intended to treat him, not as a servant, but as a son. The greatness of the favour he intended to show him was still more strongly manifested by his directing the "first," or very best robe in the house, to be brought out for him. This was such a robe as was used only on festival occasions. Thus, Rebekah "put goodly raiment on her son Jacob," when she sent him in to receive his father's blessing.†—"And put a ring on his hand," added the prodigal's father. Presenting a person with a ring, or putting it on his finger, is well known to have been always considered as a token of high regard and favour from a superior to an inferior. Thus, we read of king Ahasuerus taking off his ring, which was, no doubt, his seal, and giving it, at one time, to Haman, and at another to Mordecai.‡ So also, Pharaoh signified his conferring favour, and also authority, on Joseph, by the following tokens: "And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck."—It is here added: "*And put shoes on his feet.*" It was a dismal sight to see this once gay youth so reduced as to be, not only ragged, but barefoot.

\* *Στολν.* † Gen. xxvii. 15. ‡ Esth. iii. 10, viii. 2; Gen. xli. 42.

Perhaps we are also to consider his want of shoes as connected with his late servitude; for this is represented, in Scripture, as an accompaniment of slavery, and captivity; whereas shoes were put on men's feet when they were restored to liberty. The Lord said to Isaiah, "Go, and put off thy shoe from off thy foot," for, "so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, naked and barefoot." On the other hand, we read that certain men, expressed by name, "rose up, and took the" Jewish "captives, and, with the spoil, clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and brought them to their brethren." \*—"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it," for a joyful feast, "and let us eat and be merry," or glad. Thus, when Abraham entertained the three angels, besides directing other preparations to be made, "he ran into the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good,† and gave it unto a young man, and he hasted to dress it." The prodigal's father esteemed the day of his son's return one of the happiest of his life, and one on which the call for rejoicing was great; "for," said he, "this my son was dead, and is alive again." Indeed, the natural death of a son, however afflicting, is less grievous to pious parents, than his abandoning himself to wickedness: and his reformation is a cause of greater joy to them, than would be his recovery from sickness, or even his miraculous restoration from death to life. This father rejoiced also, and would have his whole household to rejoice, because his son who, was "lost"—lost to him, lost to himself, lost to all that was good—was "found," and restored to duty, to his friends, and to his God. This call was cheerfully complied with by the household, "and they began to be merry," or joyful.

Such was the reception which this returning prodigal met with from his earthly father: and it is an apt representation of the still more gracious reception which the returning sinner meets with from God. Awakened to a sense of his depraved, destitute, and perishing condition, and of his base and guilty conduct, he has wisely resolved to betake himself to the Lord, his Creator and Father: and, in doing so, his mind often alternates between hope and fear, so that he says within himself, "Will he pity me and take me back?

\* Isa. xx. 2, 4; 2 Chron. xxviii. 15.

"Si effexis hoc, soleas tibi dabo, et annulum in digito aureum, et bona plurima."—*Plaut. Casin.* iii. 5.

† *Odys.* xiv. 414, and xxiv. 214.

or will he be favourable no more, and cast me off for ever? I trust he will have mercy on me; and yet, how can such a wretch as I be forgiven?" But his merciful Father does not leave him in such suspense. To speak after the manner of men, he does not wait till he come quite up to him, for he hastens to meet him. Nay, this way of stating the point does not merely come up to the truth, and, if not explained, might lead to error; for, the Lord altogether anticipates the sinner with his goodness; he deals with him, and draws him in love from the very first, and before he is aware of it, or has a particle of true penitence, or faith, though now, he begins to take complacency in him, and to make him sensible of his love—now when the sinner is drawing nigh to him, he draws nigh to the sinner with gracious tokens of his reconciliation. His readiness to receive and pardon returning sinners, is dwelt on, in Scripture, in the most positive terms, and in a way calculated, as it is intended, to remove all their suspicions, and to give them confidence in his mercy. "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."—"Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."—"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."—"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." These, and such as these, are most blessed and needful declarations, in which his heavenly Father, as it were, meets the returning sinner, assures him of forgiveness, dissipates his fears, fills him with joy and peace in believing—in short, imparts to him feelings similar to those which this prodigal must have experienced, when his father ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. In this way his heavenly Father says effectually from his Word, and by his grace, to the penitent sinner returning to him through the Redeemer, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

But, as the prodigal went on to make his intended

penitential and sorrowful confession, after his father had received him with such tenderness; so, the sinner, after he is forgiven, and even knows that he is forgiven, instead of therefore ceasing to abhor his sins, abhors them the more, and is melted into genuine, filial contrition. The goodness of God leads him to repentance. He "remembers and is confounded, and never opens his mouth any more," in any unbecoming way, but is for ever humble and submissive, "because of the shame" of his sins, "when God is pacified towards him for all that he has done."\* The three important and intimately connected truths, of the sinner being brought to consideration by affliction, of his still deeper contrition after his conversion, and of the great compassion which his reconciled heavenly Father then shows towards him, are distinctly and beautifully expressed in the following passage: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God, Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore, my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

Further, as the prodigal's father proceeded to show him other acts of kindness, so the Lord, in addition to mere pardon, multiplies positive blessings on the penitent, and gives him various tokens of that pardon and of these blessings, and uses the finest comparisons to show that he treats him, not as a servant, but as a son. He puts on him, for example, the best robe, in a spiritual sense, even the wedding-garment of a Saviour's righteousness, which is his only justifying righteousness. And he, at the same time, clothes his soul with the various graces of the divine life, which are also compared to garments. He enables him to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and to "put on the new man." He clothes him with "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe:" and he clothes him with humility, and every spiritual excellence. We may consider this passage, in Zechariah, as, in part, an emblematical representation of

\* Ezek. xvi. 63.

this change in the sinner's spiritual dress, that is, state and character: "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments." By a similar figure, it is said that the clothing of the Church "is of wrought gold," and that "she shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work."\* Clothed in this best robe, the believer is represented as even now rejoicing in his redeeming God: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." It is in the same best robe, too, that the saints shall be clothed, and shine, in the blessedness of heaven for ever. "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the throne of God."—"They have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with him in white, for they are worthy."

But, the other emblems are also beautiful and expressive, when spiritually interpreted. The *ring* here, as in other cases, according to their nature, may be considered as a pledge and a memorial of the regard and affection which the Lord bears towards every convert: and we know that he puts every one of his accepted family "as a seal upon his heart, and as a seal upon his arm." The ring, too, being an ornamental part of dress, may point to the peculiarly adorning nature of the Christian graces. Whatever "adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour" is very becoming in Christians: we read, particularly, of their adorning not being outward, but "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The emblem of the *shoes* is used by Solomon, when he thus describes the graces of the Church: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!"—and by Paul, when he speaks of believers "having their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."†

\* Ps. xlv. 13.

† Cant. vii. 1; Eph. vi. 15.



This emblem may signify that God sets the feet of the convert on a rock, and establishes his goings—that he delivers his soul from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling, and enables him to walk before him in the land of the living. Several figures similar to these in this verse of the parable, are brought together, in the following passage of Ezekiel,\* to shadow forth the various honours, and substantial privileges, which the Lord conferred on his people, when, in the time of love, he entered into covenant with them; and said unto them, Live. “I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thine hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work;”—“and thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for, it was perfect, through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.” Such passages are highly figurative, indeed, but very intelligible and beautiful representations of the kindness of God to reconciled sinners. To specify only one of their many privileges—that of adoption (for, having departed from his family and acted as prodigals, they need to be received back): “To as many as received Christ, to them gave he power,” or privilege, “to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” What a privilege is this! A greater earthly exaltation can hardly be imagined than that a powerful monarch should adopt a poor, ignoble outcast, for his son and heir; but that would be a small matter, in comparison of a sinner being received as the child and heir of the living God. The full value and dignity of this privilege cannot be conceived by us. The most suitable way of speaking of it by those on whom it has been conferred, is, in grateful admiration, to exclaim, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!” To this desirable relation every penitent is here declared to be restored, and these beautiful emblems are employed to give some idea of its honours and advantages.

But his heavenly Father also orders refreshment, nay, provides a plenteous *feast*, for the famished soul of the re-

\* Ezek. xvi. 10,

claimed sinner. Figuratively interpreted, this must represent the spiritual enjoyments of the believer, such as, a sense of pardon and safety, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, hope, confidence, fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; in short, all the pleasures connected with a renewed heart and a good life. All these are compared to a feast, in various other passages of Scripture. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness," says the Psalmist; "and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." "Wisdom hath builded her house," says Solomon; "she hath hewn out her seven pillars; she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table:" and she saith, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." And Isaiah describes the blessings of salvation as "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." As the rest of the household, too, at the desire of the prodigal's father, shared the joy, and partook of the feast, so the household of faith are called on to rejoice, and do rejoice, on the occasion of the conversion of a sinner: "When one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

And, surely, the reason assigned for this joy is still more powerful in this way of applying it than in the former:—"For," saith also the God of heaven, "*this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.*" With regard to the latter of these ways of representing the saving change, "he was lost, and is found"—as we had occasion to consider it, when on the parables of the lost sheep and the lost piece of silver, it seems unnecessary to enter on it here. Let me, then, postponing every other topic for the present, take up this one very brief, but most energetic and awakening description, and press it on your serious consideration in various points of view, and at some length, by way of conclusion at this time—"He was dead, and is alive again."

We have here a striking description of the state of all men by nature—they are "dead." There are three senses in which, by nature, all men are either dead, or exposed to death. There is, first, that awful event, of which the word death most commonly conveys the idea—temporal death, the separation of the soul from the body, when the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it. This is the consequence of our having violated the divine law: "Death hath passed on all men, for

that all have sinned." The thought of this event, with its accompaniments, strikes a damp on the spirits of the gayest. The gradual inroads of age, the sudden attacks of early disease, the bodily infirmity, the agonizing pain, the pale visage, the heavy moan, the stupor, the flight of the spirit, the clay-cold corpse, the winding-sheet, the coffin, the funeral, the grave, the darkness, and the worm!—these are serious considerations to all; the most thoughtless are moved, when they witness these things in the case of others; and, when the restlessness of their minds permits them to take a steady view of these scenes as certainly to be realized in themselves, they cannot but be altogether shocking to unregenerated nature. To this death we are all exposed, and through it we must all pass. The sentence is pronounced against us: we are already dead in point of law. But, are we indeed living as those ought to live who know that they must die ere long, and know not how soon they may die? Happy those of us who are prepared for this inevitable change! But well may the apprehension of this event strike a damp on the spirits of those who are conscious that they are not attending to the things which belong to their peace.

There is another kind of death, however, little regarded, alas! but far more terrible—a death, not of the body, but of the soul—a death which darkens the light, not of the bodily eye, but of the understanding—a death which benumbs, not the hands and the feet, but the moral faculties—a death which separates the soul, not from the body, but from God. This is often called spiritual death; it is a being "dead in trespasses and sins." This death is most fearful, as it ends, if grace prevent not, in another kind of death still—eternal death, endless misery, called, in Scripture, "The second death." This is death indeed—death to soul and body; not the ceasing to exist, but death for ever to all that is desirable—death to the possibility of ever being made alive to happiness and to God. It is being dead spiritually, dead in sin, which is here declared to be the state of us all by nature.

Now, in considering this strong figure, which is frequently employed in Scripture, we must carefully avoid two extremes. We must neither advance those inconsiderate and unguarded assertions which are inconsistent with every man's own consciousness of the possession of the powers of intelligence and activity, and which, therefore, expose the truth to much unnecessary obloquy and opposition: nor must we so explain

away this figure, as to render it compatible with the views of those who reject the obvious meaning of the declarations of Scripture with regard to man's total depravity and spiritual helplessness. The metaphor must certainly be understood with some limitations. Natural death, for example, entirely destroys the faculties of the soul, in so far as that they no longer reside in the body: whereas, spiritual death leaves them resident with the soul in the body, but renders them dead, so to speak, to certain objects and pursuits, while they are alive to others. Thus, the unrenewed sinner is quite alive to earthly things; he is alive to the allurements of sin and of the world; nay, he may be possessed of a high degree of intellectual power, his judgment may be sound, his imagination may be lively, and his memory may be a store-house of varied information. Nor is it merely in science professedly human that he may excel: for, he may be versed in sacred literature, and be a profound divine. He is not so dead that he cannot use the outward means of grace; for, he can read and hear, and meditate and speak on the Word of God; and he may even pray, in a certain way. These limitations are necessary to be kept in view, both to obviate the objections of those who are altogether opposed to the genuine doctrines of human depravity and divine grace, and also to expose the abuse of these doctrines on the part of some who push them beyond all reasonable and scriptural bounds, and deduce from them very illegitimate and dangerous conclusions. Thus, from the explanation just given, appears the groundlessness of the objections of those who say that these doctrines represent men as mere machines, and render all exhortations and human endeavours useless and absurd. Thus, too, it appears that the Antinomian abuse of these doctrines, which would hinder us from exhorting sinners and proposing the gospel to unbelievers, is altogether indefensible. For, to both of these classes of persons it is a sufficient reply to remind them that fallen man is still possessed of mental faculties, and that the Spirit of God operates on these faculties by means of the exhortations of his Word read and preached.

Still, you will perceive, there is a very important sense in which men are all naturally dead. They are dead to all spiritual, vital, and acceptable religion—dead to the love of God and of holiness. Strong as the figure is, it finds a very close parallel in the state of the unrenewed. Among the most striking characteristics of a dead body may be mentioned, insensibility, inactivity, incapacity of restoring itself

to life, and loathsomeness: and are not all these found in natural men? How lamentable their *insensibility* to the excellence of divine truth, to the beauty of holiness, and to the evil and danger of sin, in themselves and others! How glorious the blessed God! and yet, what strangers are they to his love! What human being of any distinction, or in any way amiable in their estimation, of whom they know any thing, is not more the object of their concern, than the greatest and best of Beings? Only consider what reception God's dear Son receives from such persons; for, it is awful to think of it, they treat him with disdain, and turn from him with aversion, or, at best, remain, on the whole, careless and unbelieving. Is it possible that the blessings of light, and pardon, and peace, and holiness, and life eternal, could be offered in vain to perishing men, if some lamentable and shocking catastrophe had not befallen their minds? Too plain it is that the gospel is preached to a world dead in sin, for they are still unmoved and senseless. Behold, also, another accompaniment of this death, in all men, by nature—*inactivity*. Bustling, indeed, most of them are, in the pursuit of what they reckon pleasure, or profit; but, those who "live in pleasure" are declared, by divine authority, to be "dead while they live;" and it is plain that not one steady and well-directed movement is made by them towards godliness, which is "profitable unto all things." They may be found rising early, and sitting up late, and eating the bread of carefulness, to prosecute some favourite object, which, whatever it may be, is still confined to this world; but, where shall we find any of them working out their salvation, striving to enter in at the strait gate, and labouring for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life? Further, as a dead body *cannot restore itself* to natural life, neither can a soul dead to sin restore itself to spiritual. The latter is, no doubt, a moral inability; that is, it is an inability resulting from the depraved state of the will; but still, it is a real and complete inability. It is scriptural to say that unregenerate men both will not, and cannot, serve God. It is true, they could, if they would; but then, they cannot will. "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life," says our Lord: and the apostle Paul declares, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And, as natural death is soon followed by loathsomeness, putridity, and corruption,

so, who are *loathsome*, spiritually, and in the sight of God, but those who are in a state of sin? They are emphatically called "an abomination to the Lord:" and, if they continue in that state, absolute ruin must be the result; for "they who sow unto the flesh, shall, of the flesh, reap corruption." How aptly, then, does this emblem of death represent the state of all men by nature!

But it is not enough, my friends, to have ascertained the meaning of the Holy Ghost in this representation of the natural state of man; it would be well if you could now be brought to apply it to yourselves. All of you, then, now present, were once dead. Doubtless, of some of you it may be truly said, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins." But, are there not many of you still dead? Remember that it is anything but a proof of your being in a safe state, that you may never have been aware of your danger; for, insensibility is one of the concomitants of death. And, O what a startling and sad idea does this consideration convey of this assembly! Suppose that there sat, in one part of a pew, a person in full health and vigour, while there was, in another part of the same pew, a breathless and ghastly corpse; and suppose that a similar mixture prevailed throughout—suppose, in a word, that there were now as many corpses in this house as there are careless souls: what a shock would be felt by those who were alive! how piercing would be their cries! and how difficult would it be for them not to fly from the place in terror! But why is it that we are not so much affected at the thought of dead souls, as we are at that of dead bodies? Not that the tear is foolish that drops on the lifeless clay of one whom we loved; but then, that clay may have been left in the certain hope of a glorious resurrection, while the disembodied spirit may be already rejoicing in the presence of its God. Where, however, is there a spark of consolation in the case of a soul lost to everything that is excellent, and, for aught that appears, sunk in endless death? Why is it, then, that we are not as much affected at the thought of dead souls, as we are at that of dead bodies? It is because we are carried away by our senses, rather than moved by reason and the Word of God. It is because we are ourselves either quite dead, or possessed of but very little life and feeling. How many dead souls may now be present, God only knows; but one thing is certain, that, while our eye can discern, in the outward appearance of some, nothing

but the vigour of life, and the bloom of health and beauty, the piercing eye of the Eternal, penetrating into the secret recesses of the soul, may discover, as to all that is spiritual, nothing but the offensiveness of corruption, and the stillness of death.

And how will the preacher of righteousness feel, and how will he proceed, when he cannot but be sensible that, in multitudes around him, the signs of spiritual life are wanting? He feels like Ezekiel in the midst of the valley of dry bones. With mixed feelings of despondency and of hope he thinks of the question, "Son of man, can these dry bones live?"—and of the answer, "O Lord God, thou knowest." In obedience to the divine command he now begins to prophesy over the dry bones, saying, "Hear the word of the Lord." God himself calls to the dead, and so must the preacher. "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see."—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And how ought these who have experienced the power of the gospel to feel, when they think of those who are lying dead in sin? These are the most pitiable of all objects, these are the wretched indeed. "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." But exhortations and tears will never, of themselves, prevail to recall the dead to life. This is the prerogative of Him by whom life was at first conferred. Yes, there is something wanting which we cannot give, and that is the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit—the accompanying energy of the mighty power of God. To him we betake ourselves in earnest prayer, saying, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."

But, we have here, on the other hand, a fine description of the state into which those who return to God, or repent, and believe the gospel, are brought by grace—they are made "*alive again*." It has just been noticed that this change is by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Let it now be added, that it is by means of the word of the Gospel, in which Christ is received by faith: according to the language of the Psalmist, "I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me;" and of Christ himself—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Hence, this life comes along with pardon; thus, the apostle, having said to the Colossians,\* "You


\* Col. ii. 13.

being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with Christ," immediately adds, "having forgiven you all trespasses." It is proper, also, to observe, that, as spiritual death does not signify the destruction of the mental faculties, but their perversion, or, their disrelish for spiritual objects; so, spiritual life is not strictly a creation of mental faculties, but a rectifying of them, though it is so complete a change, that those who undergo it are said to be "created again in Christ Jesus unto good works." A fair and honest interpretation of this figure, too, as well as of other figures used on the subject, most certainly leads to this conclusion, that the outward reformation of conduct which the Gospel enjoins and produces, is not properly the saving change, but the consequence of it, not, strictly speaking, the principle of spiritual life itself, but the effect of that principle. Hence appears the necessity, not only of exhorting men to avoid certain sins, and to discharge certain duties, but of searching closely into the general state of the soul, in order to secure both its safety and its sanctification. Here, too, we see one leading distinction between the legal and evangelical system; for, the former, if it contemplate spiritual life at all, directs sinners to seek it by their doings, saying, "This do, and thou shalt live;" while the latter aims first at the implantation of spiritual life, in order that men may do. As it is self-evident that whatever has a beginning at all must begin at some particular time, so, instead of its being irrational to hold that this principle is instantaneous at its commencement, it is impossible that it can be otherwise. In most cases, however, the exact period cannot be ascertained. Sometimes the principle is communicated in very early life, at other times at an advanced age. From the cases of those the workings of whose thoughts have been observed, it appears, that the mind is generally prepared for receiving this principle, or for its sensible development, by a previous process. This process is various, requiring sometimes a long period, and sometimes a very short one; and it consists, chiefly, in various external means bringing the Word of God to bear on the conscience. Deep thoughtfulness, self-examination, conviction of sin and of danger, some view of the way of mercy through Christ, and earnest cries for life and salvation, are generally found in those who are about to return to the Lord. Then God is pleased to visit them with the Spirit of life, to give a holy bias to their minds, and decidedly



to begin that good work which he will carry forward to perfection. The degrees of vigour of the spiritual life are very different. As it is with the faculties of the mind, in the ordinary progress of an individual from childhood to maturity, so it is with these faculties, after they have received a spiritual direction. There are "babes in Christ;" and there are also "strong men." Still, all who have any spiritual life have a real delight in God and Christ, and a prevailing religious bent of thought and pursuit. There is within them the seed of all that is holy and happy, and a principle which will ripen into life that never ends. Wherever, then, this life is possessed, there is cause for joy—joy in heaven, and joy on earth. "It is meet," says our compassionate Father, "that we should make merry and be glad; for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again."

Let all of you who feel any thing of this life within you, be very thankful. Prize it, cherish it, improve it, to the glory of the Giver. "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."



## LECTURE LXXXIII.

LUKE XV. 11-32.

## THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON—CONCLUDED.

WE now come to consider the fourth and last part of the parable of the prodigal son, namely, *the character and conduct of the elder brother*. This part, as exhausting the subject, includes, not only what is said strictly of the elder brother himself, but also, that part of his father's conduct to which his unworthy demeanour gave rise.

While the younger son was kindly received, and the feasting and rejoicing, on his account, were going on, the "*elder son was*" abroad "*in the field.*" When he returned, and approached the house, "*he heard music and dancing.*" In almost all ages and countries these have been practised, and considered chiefly expressive of joy. As to *music*, it is mentioned at a very early period of the world's history. We read that Jubal, who lived before the flood, "was the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ." Laban complained that his son-in-law Jacob left him secretly, and did not give him an opportunity of "sending him away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp." The ancient Hebrews were very fond of music, both vocal and instrumental, and employed it in religious worship, in their public and private rejoicings, at their feasts,\* and even at their mournings; for, it is adapted to excite and express the feelings, whether joyful or plaintive. The lawfulness of its application to common as well as to sacred subjects, cannot, I think, be reasonably called in question, any more than that of the other fine arts. Doubtless, however, the

\* The feasts of the Greeks, and of the ancients in general, were usually accompanied with music, both vocal and instrumental—with singing to the harp—

Μολπή και Φορμιγγί  
Τα γὰρ τ' ἀνάθηματα δαίτης.  
*Odys. xvii. 358, et xxi. ad finem.*

chief end of music, as of every thing else, should be to promote the glory of God. Its direct application, in this way, is its best application on earth; and in this one point shall it (like every other sanctified gift of God) wholly centre at last in heaven. As for its prostitution to the encouragement of intemperance, and irreligion, that be far from Christians. Far be from them the ways of those who have "the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, in their feasts, but regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of his hands." Sad abuse! fit preparation for the place where the sound of music and the voice of rejoicing shall be heard no more at all!

But, the elder brother heard, also, the sound of *dancing*\* in the house. This circumstance is employed, by some pious persons, as an argument in support of the lawfulness of dancing; for they say, that, though this is but a parable, yet our Lord would never have used language borrowed from a practice which was in itself sinful, to describe the joy of the Church on the conversion of a sinner. They observe, too, that Solomon says, "There is a time to mourn, and a time to dance." They, therefore, cannot look on the practice as, in all cases, proscribed. Yet, they are quite aware of the dangers which in most cases attend it. The improprieties, in respect of time, and company, and character, and stage of life, and vanity, and display, not to speak of any thing worse, are so many as to confine its safety within very narrow limits. As to religious dancing, or "dancing before the Lord," as practised by Miriam and the Hebrew women, and by David,† that is altogether foreign to our modern views and habits.

But whatever may be thought of these things in other respects, it must be allowed that they would be natural in such a case as is here supposed; and also, that they are apt emblems of the spiritual joy which should be felt and expressed, both by converts themselves, and by the household of God on their account.

The elder son, hearing the sound of all this rejoicing in the house, could not conceive what was the cause of it; and calling one of the servants, inquired of him what was the meaning of these things. The servant told him that his brother had returned, and that his father was much de-

\* *Καὶ οὖν*. Le Clerc thinks this word here means, not dancing, but a choir of singers, or musicians.

† Exod. xv. 20; 2 Sam. vi. 14.

lighted on that account, and had killed the fatted calf, and made a great entertainment, "*because he had received him safe and sound*"—in good health of body, and restored to a dutiful state of mind. On receiving this information, instead of being delighted, the elder son "*was angry, and would not go in*" to the house. Now, of the traits of his character presented to us, let us mark,—

1. *His displeasure at the kind reception of his prodigal brother.* "*He was angry.*" It would be a misapprehension of the character and feelings of the elder son, to consider it as intended to represent a truly righteous person. No doubt, some degree of these feelings is occasionally betrayed by persons of true piety. Thus, when the Lord spared Nineveh, it "displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." And thus, "when the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God, and when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, those of them who were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." But pious men cannot be habitually characterized by this spirit, or continue to cherish it: accordingly, when Peter had explained the matter, it is said of these same brethren, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."\* We may here observe, that some consider the elder brother, in this parable, as standing for the Jew, and the younger for the Gentile, the Jew and the Gentile being brethren, as children by creation of the same God, and by descent of the same progenitors, whether Adam or Noah. According to this interpretation, they think that the elder brother's feeling on this occasion, is intended to represent the national prejudice which the generality of the Jews entertained against the Gentiles, and especially against the idea of their being admitted to participate with them in the privileges of Messiah's kingdom. Certainly this prejudice did prevail extensively and strongly. Writing to the Colossians, concerning the crimes of the Jews, Paul says, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins away," which signifies, that this was the consummation of their guilt. The parable is, no doubt, very applicable in that way; the connexion, however, in which it is introduced,

\* Acts xi. 1-3, 18.

shows that it refers more exactly to two particular classes of similar characters, than to the nation at large; for it is one of three parables spoken to obviate the objection of the Pharisees and scribes to Christ, because of his willingness to receive noted sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles. To suppose that our Lord introduced the elder brother to personate a truly righteous man, would be to conceive of him as speaking in a way unsuitable to the occasion, and calculated to confirm the objecting Pharisees in their opinion of their own excellence. He does not, indeed, carry the argument so far against them, as he might do with truth; he rather takes them on their own principles, and shows the unreasonableness of their objection, even on the supposition of their being as righteous as they pretended. In the way the character is drawn, however, its unlovely and unchristian features are plainly seen: and it is to be considered as a portrait of the Pharisees of every nation and every age.

Surely, the displeasure which the elder brother now manifested was very unreasonable and very sinful. "He was angry, and would not go in," when, on every account, he ought to have been glad, and to have hastened to hail his reclaimed brother on his return, to join with the rest of the household in marks of kindness towards him, and to share in the joyful festivities. He had some thing to say for himself, no doubt, but instead of justifying, it condemned him more and more. And so it is always. What though Pharisaical men attempt to cloak their displeasure at the kind reception of a convert, and their hatred of the godly, under the pretence of a regard for religion and morality? It is nothing but a pretence, and the pretence is an aggravation of the crime. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word," says Isaiah, "Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified! But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." In the character of the elder brother, we notice,—

2. *His self-righteous pride.* "*Lo, these many years do I serve thee,*" said he to his father, "*neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.*" He boasted of the many years he had lived with him, labouring, perhaps, in the field, and in the capacity of a servant, rather than of a son. And what of that? was he not kindly treated all the time? and should he not have been happy before the face of so indulgent a parent? Let us not boast of any little service

we render to our heavenly Father. Is not his service perfect freedom? Is not our duty our true interest? and should it not be our pleasure? Even though we may have been very dutiful, according to the scale of human attainment, nay, even though our service were absolutely perfect, all could give it no claim of merit. "So likewise ye," says Christ, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." As to the son's boast that he had never at any time transgressed his father's commandment, he must have been such a son as never yet existed in any other family, if it was true: for, however amiable and dutiful the character and conduct of some children may be, where is the child who has never shown any frowardness, or disobedience, and who has never at any time "done evil as he could?" The emptiness of this boast is rendered plain by his own conduct on this occasion; for, if he had really been so very dutiful formerly, as he pretended, would he now have become angry and obstinate, or would he have been guilty of reflecting so unworthily on his father's conduct? But, it is not uncommon for men to boast of their uprightness, at the very time when they might certainly know that they are radically defective. We have a very striking example of this in the case of Saul, after his marked disobedience of the divine command, with regard to Amalek. When Samuel came to him, he said to the prophet, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Grant, however, that the elder son's conduct was decent and dutiful in comparison of that of the younger in his wanderings, it was mere ignorance, pride, and self-righteousness, to speak of it in this way. Let us be admonished by this. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." By deeds of law none of us can be justified in the sight of God. "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded." Observe,

3. The elder brother's *ingratitude*. "*Yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.*" He considered his good services as undervalued, and forgot all the obligations under which his father had laid him. Did not his father assign him his portion of goods at the same time with his brother?—but that he now forgot. Had he not always fared well in his father's house, and

shared in all its pleasures? He seems, too, to betray a dissatisfaction with his father's society, and a desire to find enjoyment in the company of others, when he speaks of making merry with his friends, as he calls them. He ungratefully and enviously complained that his father had not given him so much as a kid, while he had killed the fatted calf for his younger son. In a word, he accused him of unkindness and partiality. How perverse! Let us beware of this spirit. Let us not say, or think, that God is as "an austere man;" but let us be sensible of, and acknowledge, his many unmerited favours. Let us not be of those whose words are stout against the Lord, saying, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?" Let us not be discontented with the favour shown to ourselves, because of the favour shown to others. In this respect, too, there is bread enough in our heavenly Father's house, and to spare: and if we view the matter properly, the greater the number of those who share his kindness, and the greater the degree in which they share it, the richer and the happier we shall be.

4. We cannot fail to remark the elder brother's *malicious pleasure in dwelling on the misconduct of the reclaimed prodigal, and overlooking the change that had taken place in him.* "As soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots." Perhaps, this may have been a correct description of his conduct on the whole, though it was not expressed exactly in the same way before; yet, it must be allowed that the terms here employed are very strong, and even intentionally harsh. It was going beyond the truth, too, to say, without qualification, that the prodigal had devoured his father's living—that is, all his living; for, it is obvious that his father was still opulent. And then, while he enlarged on the former crimes, he entirely overlooked the late conversion of the prodigal, and thereby tacitly insinuated, that it was of no consequence, or that it was all hypocrisy. We are here reminded, how cruel and sinful it is to disdain, and vilify, and upbraid those who, whatever they have been, or done, formerly, are now reformed, and brought to believe in the Saviour, and live to God. The baseness of such conduct far outweighs any good that there can be in mere external sobriety; and proves that those who are wilfully and habitually guilty of it have never been true penitents themselves, and are far inferior in character to those whom they despise. It becomes all pious persons to

be on their guard against every degree of this spirit. Paul thus writes to the Corinthians, concerning the excommunicated person, who had repented and been restored to the Church: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that, contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you that ye would confirm your love towards him." After enumerating various classes of sinners, too, he thus writes to the Corinthian converts in general, in a strain that shows how he delighted to dwell, not on what they were in the days of their ignorance, but on what they had become since they received the gospel: "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

5. Remark this elder son's virtually *disowning* the reclaimed prodigal. He would not acknowledge him as his brother. "*This thy son,*" said he, to his father, sneeringly. He would not call him by his name, nor by the endearing appellation of brother, as those who stand in that relation to each other are wont to do. This was surely very improper, more especially considering the happy change which had taken place on him. "This son of thine," said he, intimating that his father might treat him as a son, if he was so disposed, but he would not own him as a brother, and thereby insinuating that his father's conduct, in the case, was at least weak, if not worse. This was exactly the opposite of what true religion requires. Whether there be any tie of blood between us or not, we are bound to own those whom God has forgiven, and to acknowledge, as a brother, him whom he has received as a son. When Ananias of Damascus was directed, in a vision, to go and inquire for Saul of Tarsus, and put his hand on him that he might receive his sight, he answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." But as soon as he understood that Saul was a chosen vessel unto the Lord, and a converted man, he went with cheerfulness, entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, addressed him affectionately—"Brother Saul." The same apostle afterwards wrote concerning himself, "I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea, which were in Christ; but they



had heard only, that he who persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed: and they glorified God in me." \* The letter which Paul wrote to Philemon, when he sent back to him his run-away servant Onesimus, converted, contains the following beautiful passage: "Perhaps he departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." Nay, our divine Redeemer himself says, and therefore it is no great condescension in the highest of his followers to say after him, "Whoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

In union with all this, we remark, Lastly, on this branch of the subject, though it is mentioned earlier in the narrative, the elder brother's *refusal to go in to share in the feast*. This was the natural result of the dissatisfaction, pride, ingratitude, and malice, which he was cherishing, and which he had even expressed. The feast was not in honour of him, and therefore, he would have none of it: the rejoicing was not on his account, and, therefore, it was no joy—it was an offence to him. Here was not only malevolence, in grudging the attention which was shown to his returned brother, but folly in shutting himself out from the enjoyment of which he might have been an abundant partaker. So, however, do all Pharisees, all self-righteous persons, still refuse at once to manifest any pleasure in the conversion of others, and to come to the gospel feast themselves. The feast is not in honour of them, and therefore they have no relish for it. They value not, and will not attend, nay, they greatly dislike the spiritual feast, at which all praise is given to the Lamb, and free grace is exalted in the salvation of the chief of sinners. So ignorant are they of their own wants, that they reject the gospel because penitents, whom they despise, are admitted to all its blessings. The true Christian acts very differently. He joins in the rejoicing occasioned by the return of a sinner to God; and, in doing so, he not only follows the impulse of spiritual benevolence, but becomes happier and better himself, while the glorious grace, which at first pacified and captivated his soul, is again unfolded to him in its primitive freshness and power.

But this fourth part of the parable, as already stated, includes, not only what is said strictly of the elder brother

\* Acts ix. 17; Gal. i. 22.

himself, but also *that part of his father's conduct to which his unworthy demeanour gave rise*. And what a beautiful contrast is here presented to our consideration! How great his father's condescension and kindness!

Observe, first, his *condescension*. Learning that his elder son had arrived, but was angry, and would not come in, "*he went out and entreated him*." He did not send a servant, but he went himself. He entreated him to lay aside his displeasure, and to come in to welcome home his brother, and partake of the feast. And notwithstanding his son's boasting, and rude attack, he continued composed and condescending, and replied meekly, "*Son*" (for so he still called him, far from filial though his behaviour now was), "*Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine*." In whatever case these words are really applicable in their full spiritual sense, they describe a believer, one who is an adopted and regenerated child of God. Hence arises, to some, the chief difficulty in the way of giving a consistent interpretation of this parable. We have seen enough to convince us, that, however the delineation of the character of the elder brother may be useful in furnishing caution to believers by inference, it is intended not to represent a truly righteous person, but to expose the pride and uncharitableness of the scribes and Pharisees. This general principle, then, furnishes a key to this particular difficulty. In the spiritual interpretation of this clause, we are to consider the Lord as reasoning with an objecting and proud Pharisee on his own principles. Granting, for the sake of argument, that he was really the righteous man who had never transgressed; still, his dissatisfaction, on this occasion, was very unreasonable. God judges him out of his own mouth. The Jewish Pharisee was ever with God, in the sense of having free access to him at all times, if it was not his own fault; and all that the Lord had was his, in respect of outward religious privileges. If these Pharisees, and the Jews in general, had been God's children, and heirs in the saving sense, their privileges would have been continued with them, notwithstanding the calling of the Gentiles. Still, whatever was their character, and, especially, if they were holy, as they pretended, it became all of them to rejoice at the conversion and gracious acceptance of others, which could not injure *them*. Our Lord might have carried the argument further against them; but though, on other occasions, he freely exposed the iniquity of the Pharisees, he here goes no further than was required for establishing the point in hand,

which he does most satisfactorily. He proved, in few words, that the elder son had no reason to be displeased, but that the best reasons existed for all that was done. So, God often condescends to reason with the prejudiced, and to prove that there is no improper partiality in his ways. The case of Cain and Abel is not unlike the one here supposed. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." So also, the Lord reasoned with Jonah, saying, "Doeest thou well to be angry?" and again, "Doeest thou well to be angry for the gourd?"—and, "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city?" God might always rest the propriety of what he does on his mere authority; but he often condescends to reason it with his creatures. "The ways of the Lord are right;" and he proves them to be right, that he may be justified when he speaks, and be clear when he judges. He argues with sinners, to overcome their obstinacy, and to bring them to submit to his will, and rejoice in the happiness of his people. And, surely, the reason here assigned for joy, as already explained, is unanswerably strong. "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother" (so he teaches the elder son to consider him)—"this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

But, not less remarkable, secondly, was the *kindness* of his father. It was kind in him to bear with his elder son at all. He might justly have caused him to feel the weight of his displeasure. It was still more kind in him, instead of letting him alone in his obstinate mood, to use means to bring him to a better mind. As he kindly bore with his younger son in the days of his folly, and forgave him on his return; so he now kindly bears with his elder son in the day of his pride, and goes to him with words of entreaty. In short, he wishes to make both his sons happy. Now, thus it is that the Lord God, not only receives those who have notoriously offended against him when they turn, but also, graciously bears with the comparatively decent, but proud and unbelieving, and uses means to remove their prejudices, and reconcile them to himself. He repeats his calls of mercy: he invites, he entreats them to come in and partake of the blessings of his house, of the privileges and

joys of his children. Happy every one with whom his entreaties prevail!

The parable does not say whether the elder brother was won by these entreaties or not. If any one, in such circumstances, is won by such means, it is well; but, if he is not won, he is altogether inexcusable. Nor does Luke tell us what effect this and the two preceding parables had on the murmuring Pharisees and scribes. Some of them may have been convinced: but, it is probable that most of them continued obstinate and unbelieving. However this may have been, they ought all to have been not only silenced, but satisfied, and gained over to the truth.

Having thus treated the parable, in its four parts, at considerable length, both as to its literal meaning, and as to its spiritual application, I shall now, in concluding, only briefly point out some of the instructions which it affords regarding a class of duties to which we have scarcely adverted, and then beseech you to improve this delightful parable in its great outline and general bearing.

This parable, then, ought to be considered as furnishing, by just inference, much *instruction regarding some of the relative duties of children, parents, and brethren*. This parable contains much instruction to *grown up children*. It should remind them how much the happiness of their parents depends on their good conduct—how their dutifulness will delight, and their waywardness grieve them. It should teach them, if they have pious parents who watch over them with care, not to grow weary of the salutary restraint, but to value their faithful and affectionate superintendence as it deserves. It should show them that, whatever they may pretend, they are not their friends who would lead them to be dissatisfied with their parents' society, and entice them away from them, in search of forbidden pleasure. It should teach them, when they go abroad, to act as they should act at home under their parents' eye; and not to forget them, nor give them any occasion to suspect that they have forgotten them, or become indifferent about them, but to keep up a regular correspondence with them, and also to take care that others may have reason to report favourably of them, so that their parents may "rejoice greatly," as they can "have no greater joy than to hear that their children walk in truth." If children have any substance at their own command, this parable teaches them not to waste it wickedly, or foolishly, but to manage it wisely, and use it properly and piously. If they have been, on the whole,

dutiful to their parents, this parable, while it encourages such dutifulness, teaches them not to be proud of it, but to be mindful of their shortcomings, and to become more and more conscientious in this respect. If any children are conscious of having behaved unkindly and disobediently to their parents, or of having grieved them by misconduct, in any way, they are here called on to do so no more, but to change their life, and to begin to please them, and make them happy.

There is much instruction here also to *parents*. This parable teaches them how to treat undutiful, grown up children, whether their conduct be more or less reprehensible. Though they ought to restrain them from evil, as much as in their power, they are to give them a reason for what they do, in most instances, and are to trust more to the effect of persuasion, than of stern authority. They should be mild and condescending to them, though they be in fault. And if any of them desert their houses, or become very profligate, or offend them grievously, they are not to be inexorable, they are not to refuse to receive them back into favour; but they are to remember that they are still their children, and to welcome them to their forgiveness, and to their aid. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive any circumstances which could justify a parent in entirely casting off his own son, or daughter. Is any parent ready to say, "Gladly would I receive back my undutiful and prodigal son, would he only bethink himself, and return; but, alas! there is no hope of that?" Do not despair: continue to use the means of entreaties, good example, and prayer, for his conversion; and God may be expected to bless them. "Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

There is some instruction here, too, as to *the duties which children of the same family owe to each other*. This parable teaches them not to seek to monopolize their parents' kindness to themselves, not to grudge any favour shown to any other member of the family, and not to be too severe, not to be unforgiving, to an offending brother or sister. It calls on them to seek each other's salvation, to rejoice in each other's good, and to live in love and peace. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren" thus "to dwell together in unity!"

Finally, Let me beseech you all to *improve this delightful parable in its great outline and general bearing*. Meditate closely, and often, on the humiliating view of your natural condition, represented by that of the prodigal in his distance from his father's house; on the nature and necessity of repentance unto life, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, set forth in the prodigal's return; on the astonishing grace displayed in his reception; and on the very unbecoming conduct of the elder brother. Have *you* returned to the Lord, or not? If you have, you have felt the evil of the state of sin and distance—you have humbled yourselves before him—you have cast yourselves on his free mercy, in his own appointed way of faith in the Redeemer—you have obtained filial dispositions, and you love his house and his people. If so, go not astray again; wander not away any more from the security and blissfulness of his presence. Seek your portion and your happiness, not away from him, but in him, and with him, saying, with the Psalmist, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart fail: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

If you have not returned to the Lord, but are afar off from him in open profligacy, or in secret unbelief and carelessness, be entreated now to turn and live. Do not continue madly in the career of vice which you cannot but know to be destructive; neither wrap yourselves up in the cloak of sullenness, obstinacy, and self-righteousness, for that would also be fatal. If any of you feel that you ought to return to your heavenly Father, and are desirous to return, but afraid that he will reject you, remember the parable of the prodigal son, and make haste and fall down before the Lord, and he will receive you graciously, and love you freely. He will in no wise cast you out, but will welcome you home to himself. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The Lord enable you so to do. May he bless our meditations on this parable, to his own glory and our good; and to his name be praise. Amen.

## LECTURE LXXXIV.

LUKE XVI. 1-8.

"And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6. And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

It is, without doubt, to those who have been brought under the influence of the gospel that the Christian is chiefly to look for an edifying example; yet, it is possible for him to confine his attention too exclusively to them, and thus to overlook the useful lessons he might learn from men of the world, and forget that he should be willing to be taught even by an enemy. He is not, indeed, to adopt the motives and principles on which such men act, nor is he to propose to himself the same ultimate end with them; but, their manner of proceeding, on these motives and principles, towards the attainment of their end, is, in some respects, deserving of his careful attention and imitation. While he is to be most observant of the way of the pious, and while he cannot but assign to it the palm of superiority, on the whole, he is not superciliously to condemn every thing else, as being in no degree worthy of his regard, because it is destitute of spirituality; but he is to have his eyes open, and his mind attentive to all that is passing around him, knowing that there is nothing from which he may not draw instruction, when rightly interpreted. The Word of God, at times, sends him even to the irrational animals for instruc-

tion. It guards him against ingratitude and inconsideration, by the example of the beasts of the stall—"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider:" and it directs him to learn diligence from the ant—"Go to the ant, thou slug-gard; consider her ways and be wise." No wonder, then, that it should occasionally refer him to the conduct of human beings still estranged from God. It guards him against instability, by the rooted attachment of the heathen to their idols—"Pass over the isles of Chittim and see, and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." As for this parable of the unjust steward now before us, its leading object is to call on the Christian to observe and to improve the example of worldly men.

This parable furnishes one of the strongest exemplifications of the necessity of the rule of interpretation which we have repeatedly noticed, namely, that parables are not to be run too close, but to be explained, some of them, almost solely, and the rest of them chiefly, according to their leading idea, otherwise gross errors would be deduced from them. Thus, an inconsiderate and partial view of the character of the elder brother, in the parable of the prodigal son, might encourage self-righteousness; and an inconsiderate and partial view of this parable might encourage injustice. The scope of this parable is to teach, that when men of the world misapply so much ability, diligence, and perseverance, in the pursuit of their earthly, and, perhaps, positively sinful objects, Christians ought rightly to apply, at least as much wisdom, diligence, and perseverance in the pursuit of their all-important and holy object—the salvation of their souls. If we keep it constantly in view, that this is the intention of the parable, and rest satisfied with this, various difficulties and objections will be prevented, which would otherwise arise, and abundant room will still remain for much useful instruction.

"*There was a certain rich man who had a steward.*" According to the most judicious interpretation, these words, and of course the rest of the parable, are to be understood literally, and in the very sense which they, at the first hearing, convey. We may, indeed, take occasion, from the parable, to speak of God as the master, and man as his steward; but that is an accommodation of its words, and not an



exact explication of the meaning which Jesus intended it to bear. We are just to suppose an earthly master having a servant, as here stated, who conducts himself as is afterwards described; from all which our Lord gives a lesson to his own disciples, on the way in which they should, but too often do not, prosecute their everlasting interests. This steward, or confidential servant, to whom his master had delegated high authority, and whom he had intrusted with the management of his house and lands, and all his worldly affairs, was charged, and but too justly, with having wasted his goods, by mismanagement and extravagance. The unfaithful man went on, in this course, unsuspected, and secure for a season; but, if he flattered himself that he would never be discovered and punished, his expectation was foolish, and proved to be vain. As soon as his master was informed how he was going on, he sent for him, and said to him, with sharpness, "*How is it that I hear this of thee?*" What is this that I hear? Can this be true? I had expected better things. "*Give*" me "*an account of thy stewardship*"—produce thy receipts and disbursements, and explain fully thy whole management: "*for thou mayest be no longer steward*"—thou canst not continue to hold this important office, unless all these points be cleared up to my satisfaction.

The steward knew well that it was quite impossible for him to render any satisfactory account of his affairs; his conscience already condemned him; and, despairing of being able to retain his situation, he only thought of what he could do for himself next. He was brought to his wit's end; and he anxiously revolved, in his own mind, the question as to what expedient he should now betake himself. He could not look for any favour from him whom he had already so deeply injured; nor could he reasonably expect to procure any desirable new situation, after being thus turned away for misconduct. Only two honest ways of obtaining the necessities of life now remained for him; the one was to labour, and the other was to beg. "*He could not*"—that is, he was not able, he was not strong enough,\* to "*dig*," or to work in any way as a day labourer. He may have been naturally feeble; or, more probably, the habits of ease and self-indulgence in which he had been long accustomed to live, had rendered him unfit for labour. If this was only the excuse of sloth, it was very improper. "*The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour,*" says Solomon.

\* Οὐκ ἰσχυρὸν.

Every man who needs to do so, and is at all able, should work for his bread, either with his head or with his hands. "When we were with you," writes Paul to the Thessalonians, "this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now, them that are such we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."—"I cannot dig," said he; "*to beg, I am ashamed.*" It is, certainly, a very shameful thing in persons to beg, when there is any other lawful way in which they can obtain the necessaries of life; and there are not a few who go about in that way needlessly, and who, therefore, ought to be ashamed of it. It would be well, were Christian liberality always so extensive and prompt, as to prevent, in every case, the necessity of begging. But, where that is not so, and where there is a real necessity for begging, it becomes a duty, and therefore, the poor people have then no occasion to be ashamed to beg. It is better to beg than to starve, and far better to beg than to steal. Those who have the things which are needful for the body, should be thankful that they are thereby placed beyond the reach of one temptation to dishonesty. Agur was aware of the danger, both of want and of great wealth, and, therefore, he prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

After some consideration, the steward, instead of bringing down his mind completely to his altered condition, and becoming willing to adopt any plan, however humbling, by which he could honestly obtain a livelihood, fixed on the iniquitous expedient of endeavouring to secure the future good-will and services of his master's debtors, by relieving them from the obligation of part of their debt; hoping that, when he should be put out of his office, they would thus be disposed to receive him into their houses, and to assist him in various ways. Having resolved on this scheme, he immediately carried it into execution. He sent for his master's debtors, and negotiated, on the principle above mentioned, with every one of them who would avail himself of so dishonest an advantage. Finding, for example, that one debtor owed "*an hundred measures,*" or *baths*,\* "*of oil, he said*

\* A bath contained 7½ gallons, and was the same as an ephah.

unto him, *Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.*" We may suppose that this bill was a note written with the debtor's own hand, acknowledging the receipt of the oil, and promising to pay it; and that he was directed, by the steward, either to make an alteration of the quantity originally stated in the same bill, or, to write out a new one altogether, while the steward engaged to alter the account which he kept, so as to make it correspond with the reduced quantity. In like manner, finding that another debtor owed "*an hundred measures,*" or *cors*,\* "*of wheat,*" he directed him to charge himself only with "*eighty.*" And so he proceeded with the rest.

This base conduct came to his master's knowledge also; and the way in which he expressed himself, with regard to it, no doubt, appears, at first, surprising to many. "*And the lord,*" that is, his lord, or master, "*commended the unjust steward.*" No thinking person can suppose that he commended him for his injustice. Even though his own interest had not been concerned, if he had any moral feeling, any perception of the distinction between right and wrong, he could never have applauded a gross fraud such as this, in any case. But, when it is considered that this case concerned himself, and that he was here grievously injured, or, at least, that an attempt was made so to injure him, in his own property, it could not be but that he was offended, and disapproved highly of his steward's treachery. As for our Saviour, his disapprobation of this conduct is very plainly expressed in the designation which, as the relater of the parable, he gives the man, when he here calls him the *unjust steward*. In what sense, then, and for what was it, that his master commended him? He commended him "*because he had done wisely.*"† He applauded him as having acted with ingenuity. The plan he had adopted was, certainly, artfully contrived for the end he had in view. He made these fraudulent debtors accomplices with himself, so that they could not expose him, without exposing themselves. He had them, as it were, in his power, so that he could bring them to any terms, and extort any favour from them afterwards. He looked to his own future resource in them; he pursued his plan most dexterously and daringly; and he cared not what means he employed, if he could only pro-

\* The *cor* was the same as the *homer*; it contained ten *baths* or *ephahs*, and was their largest measure of capacity.

† *Φρονιμως.*

cure some temporal advantage for himself. That this was a deep contrivance, his master perceived, and acknowledged. Thus, it frequently happens, that when we are quite sensible of the utter worthlessness of a man, in point of religion and morality, we yet cannot but confess his great ability, and allow that he has acted his part well, and cleverly, such as it is. The conduct of the steward certainly displayed wisdom of a certain kind, though not true wisdom. It was crooked, though ingenious policy; it was expert, though not honest and open dealing. It had much of the wisdom of the serpent, but nothing of the harmlessness of the dove. We are ever to keep in mind that there are two kinds of wisdom—the wisdom of the world, and the wisdom which is of God—the wisdom which is earthly, and the wisdom from above. This distinction is thus marked, by the Apostle James\*—"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts" (and what the apostle says of envying and strife, is true of dishonest policy, and of every other sin), "glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."—"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Indeed, the earthly wisdom of the steward's scheme was, after all, rather apparent than real; for, as his device came to his master's knowledge, it was, of course, exposed, and all the expectations of advantage from it, which he entertained, were frustrated.

This parable may, very properly, be considered as ending with the first clause of the 8th verse, "The lord," that is, the master, "commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely." The last clause of the verse will then be considered as the remark of the relater of the parable, that is, of our Saviour; which remark will contain the moral of the parable, or the chief lesson which he intends it to read to us. The master commended his steward because he had done wisely, "*For,*" adds our Saviour, "*the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light.*" This is a most weighty saying, well worthy of our serious consideration.

Let us notice *the two classes* of persons here spoken of—

\* James iii. 13,

the "children of this world," and "the children of light." "The children," or people, "of this world," are those of whom the Psalmist speaks, when he prays that the Lord would deliver his soul from "men of the world, who have their portion in this life." They are characterized by very different kinds and degrees of sin. Some of them are openly irreligious and immoral; others are decent, and even engaging in their manners. Still, they are all in a state of guilt and depravity; and they are all well said to be "of this world," as they think, and speak, and act, for the things of time, and not for those of eternity. On the other hand, all real Christians, all truly pious persons, are called "children of light," because they are illuminated, that is, instructed, in the saving knowledge of the truth, from the Scriptures, by the influence of the Holy Spirit. They are a spiritually enlightened people. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." They believe the gospel, according to the precept of their Lord,\* "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." Believing in the gospel, they also, on the whole, live according to it. "They show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." They are "not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds." They feel the insufficiency of all earthly things; they look chiefly at the things which are not seen, and which are eternal; and their chief aim, notwithstanding all their imperfections, is, to have their portion, not in this world, but in the world to come. Whatever may have been their ignorance and worldliness formerly, they are now enlightened and sanctified. They were once darkness, but now are they light in the Lord, and they walk as children of the light. Let us carefully mark this description of the two great classes which include the whole human race. Let none of us imagine that it is possible for us to occupy any middle station; for, to the one or the other of these classes we all, at this moment, belong—we are either the children of the world, or the children of light.

It might be supposed that the children of light would always be more concerned, and display more wisdom, about their spiritual affairs, than the children of this world about their temporal: and so it ought to be; but, it is not gene-

\* John xii. 36.

rally so; for, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." They are wiser in their *generation*. This word, which has several senses in Scripture, is here used in one of its least common. Without tracing it through its ramifications of meaning, it may be enough to say that it is here put for the manner of acting in the affairs of this life.\* We have already noticed, in a general way, the difference between the wisdom of men of the world and that of Christians, as such; and this saying of Christ's now invites us to follow out the idea farther, and to mark the superiority, in a certain sense, of men of the world. Wisdom has been often said to consist in two things, namely, choosing the best end, and pursuing that end by the most suitable means. In the former point, or the end in view, the children of light always have infinitely the advantage; but in the latter, or the suitable choice and zealous use of the means, they are often surpassed by the children of this world.

More particularly, worldly men discover more wisdom than believers, in the prosecution of their favourite objects, in that they pursue them with *more ingenuity of contrivance*. The dexterity of the steward, in this parable, is a specimen of the ingenuity which they often display. Some of them do not scruple to have recourse to fraudulent practices, with a view of promoting their pecuniary advantage; and some of them expend more thought and genius in accomplishing and endeavouring to conceal their dishonest purposes, than would be sufficient, if virtuously directed, to raise them to deserved and honourable distinction. But, not to insist farther on so black an exhibition as this—for there are many men of the world who would spurn the idea of such dishonesty and treachery—it is sufficient for our purpose, to remark the deep thought the children of this world bestow on their favourite objects, and the ingenious plans they lay down for their accomplishment. They spare no pains to understand the subjects, and they labour to excel in the theory of them, to make new discoveries, and to proceed in the most sagacious way. How expert are they in acquiring gain! How dexterous at warding off temporal evils altogether, and alleviating them when they come, and putting an end to them as soon as possible! It is true that some of their speculations prove ruinous; yet still, they deserve the character of much skill, on the whole. But, the chil-

\* See Gen. vi. 9, xxxvii. 2.

dren of light are far from being, in general, so considerate and ingenious in their schemes for the spiritual good of themselves and others. With the full light of the Word of God before them, they do not study it so intensely as others study the arts and sciences of life. They are satisfied with confused and inaccurate views of doctrines and duties. They too often neglect to form sensible plans for private devotion, growth in grace, family religion, and public usefulness. Too often their well-meant endeavours to do good are frustrated, from radical defects in their schemes, want of discrimination of the character of others, or rashness and intemperate zeal in themselves. The most favourable opportunities are often allowed to pass by unimproved; and very serious spiritual losses are sustained, through their inconsideration and mistakes.

Further, the children of this world are wiser than the children of light, as they pursue their objects with *more union*. The world has its party and its cause, as well as the true Church; and there is often to be seen united effort in the former, and disunion in the latter. Not that the principles of worldly and irreligious men tend to promote harmony, or that they are always united in fact: on the contrary, a system of error must, on the whole, produce contention, as a system of truth must, on the whole, produce peace. But still, there is often a surprising union among the worldly; and, however they may differ from each other on most other points, they are very generally united to oppose the truth, to bear down those who most plainly live under its influence, and to support each other in their unhallowed maxims and habits. This is very wise in them, such wisdom as it is: it is the true way to support their cause, for, a house divided against itself cannot stand. The children of light, however, are often not so wise to perceive the importance of being united to support each other, and to forward the cause of God in the world. Little differences and petty jealousies too often prevail to make them shy of each other, and even to make them attack each other, and mar each other's comfort and usefulness. This ought not so to be. "If ye bite and devour one another," says the apostle, "take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

Again, the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light, as they pursue their objects with *greater earnestness*. Having made choice of their

object, and having fixed judiciously on the means for attaining it, they proceed forthwith, with all eagerness. They grudge no labour. They rise early, and sit up late, and they eat the bread of carefulness. Dangers do not deter them, difficulties do not discourage them, amusements do not materially divert them, from their purpose. When they have taken a side in philosophy, or politics, they are not ashamed of their opinions, but confess them openly, and contend for them strenuously, and use all means in their power to bring others over to their way of thinking. How eagerly did the steward inquire with himself, "What shall I do!" how decided was he in his purpose, "I am resolved what to do!" and, with what promptness and eagerness did he carry it into effect, sending for the debtors, and saying to the first, "Sit down quickly!" Though such energetic conduct may fail, it is generally successful; and, therefore, it is very wise, for the end for which it is followed. But, is there as much earnestness generally manifested by believers, in the pursuit of their noblest of all ends? By no means. Sincerity is, indeed, essential to the very being of true religion; but, men are frequently sincere in religion, without being very zealous and decided. What want of earnestness, for example, often in prayer and other religious exercises! and how frequently does the Christian require the exhortation, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God!" And then, what want of courage often in defending the truth, when it is attacked; and what want of zeal in exertion for its spread!

Once more, the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light, as they prosecute their objects *with greater perseverance*. They are not soon discouraged from the pursuit of their favourite object. If they fail in their first attempts, they do not give up, but they renew their efforts with greater vigour than before, and go on for a long time; they persevere till they succeed, nay, often till they attain a high eminence of wealth, power, and honour. But, Christians are by no means, in general, so persevering in their spiritual work. No child of light, it is true—and blessed be God for it!—ever relapses into total darkness, or gives up the struggle so as to be finally lost. But it is not unusual for believers to become weary in duty, to be disheartened by trials, to cease, in a great measure at least, from cultivating certain graces, because they have not



hitherto succeeded in them to their wish, and thus to fall far short of that degree of eminence in the divine life here, and of course in heavenly happiness hereafter, to which they would have attained, had they uniformly persevered with the same diligence which they exercised at certain stages of their progress.

In such respects, then, as these, "the children of this world are, in their generation," or, in their manner of acting in the affairs of this life, "wiser than the children of light" in their way of acting in the affairs of their souls and of eternity. And, to what is the deficiency on the part of believers owing, but to the remaining partial blindness and depravity of their hearts? Had they continued in the unmitigated ignorance and depravity of nature, they could not have put forth any wisdom or energy at all in the prosecution of salvation. As it is, their depravity, though struck at the root, and fading, is not yet altogether eradicated; the old man in them, though mortally wounded, is not yet dead: and therefore, there is a constant struggle between the two principles of fallen nature and grace, the former of which, though it shall never prevail entirely over the latter, but, at last, be annihilated before it, in the meantime annoys them much, and prevents them from acting with all that wise decision to which the new man, or, their renovated nature, if left to its own undisturbed tendencies, would, under God, certainly and constantly lead them.

In the farther improvement of this parable, it may be proper,

1. To put in a caution against all fraudulent and wicked policy in our dealings with our fellow-creatures. Our Lord here condemns everything of this kind, in branding this steward with the epithet of "The unjust." This caution is especially to be attended to by those who occupy confidential places, as servants under earthly masters. They should conscientiously avoid injuring their employers by dishonesty, or neglect, or mismanagement, or extravagance. Let them be exhorted to be "obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." But, the caution should be attended to by persons in all classes of life. Let all beware of violating the rules of honesty and integrity. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not

inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived;" "neither thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." If any have offended in this way, let them forthwith make restitution, as far as they can, and betake themselves to the Lord for his pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. Let none reckon themselves secure in iniquity because of their ingenuity. Nor, let any think of being guilty of additional frauds, in order to conceal, or to prevent, the consequence of former ones. Let all be on their guard against chicane, disingenuousness, and crooked policy of every kind, whether in relation to property, or in relation to other concerns. Let them rest assured, that all such wisdom will prove consummate folly at last. Let them shudder at the thought of belonging to the class thus described by Jeremiah,\* "They are wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge." Let none be proud of misapplied abilities, for who so subtle as that old serpent the devil? "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool," let him acknowledge his own ignorance, "that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Let us study to preserve this "testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

2. This parable *should lead the children of this world, in the midst of all their fancied wisdom and security, to think of their real folly and danger.* What though they are wise in their own estimation, when they are not wise according to the standard of Scripture? What though they are wise in the judgment of the world (and "men will praise those who do well for themselves"), when they are fools in the sight of God? What though they are dexterous, be it in an honest way, to increase their wealth, when they imprudently neglect the only thing absolutely necessary for their final happiness? "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Let them "cease from their own wisdom," and "ask wisdom of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given them."

3. *Let the wisdom displayed by worldly men, in the pro-*

\* Jer. iv. 22.

*secution of their temporal objects, be imitated by Christians in the prosecution of their spiritual.* Attend to this, you who rank among the children of light. This will not be to be conformed to this world; on the contrary, there is no more decided way of manifesting nonconformity to the world, and protesting against it, than adopting its eagerness of action, in another and a nobler pursuit. Instead of the carnal policy which is in them, let there be holy ingenuity and prudence in you. Take a lesson from their general union in worldly schemes. When they conspire, you should associate. Union here is strength. When objects, comparatively so paltry as theirs, can command efforts so earnest and persevering, surely, that most glorious object of yours, perfect and endless holiness and happiness, should draw forth all your powers, and keep you steady to the last. "Watch, then, thereunto, with all perseverance and supplication."

Lastly, though it does not seem to have been immediately in the view of our Lord when he spoke the parable, the way in which it opens may lead us to think of God as our Master, and ourselves as stewards, and remind us of our duty and accountableness as such. There is nothing that we have which we can strictly call our own. Our life, our health, our reason, our property, our means and measure of grace, are all intrusted to us, that we may manage and improve them as stewards. As we have all been, in some degree, unfaithful, let us not have recourse to unworthy and vain expedients for extricating ourselves, but let us plead guilty, and cast ourselves at once on our Lord's mercy. For the future, let us remember that "it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful." Our Lord may soon say to any of us, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." We shall all have to give in our account at death, and in judgment. Let us improve the means of salvation now in our power; let us keep fast hold of the divine mercy, through faith in the atonement; and let us be active in every duty. Let us daily inspect our accounts ourselves, in the way of self-examination, that we may be ready to give in our account to be inspected by our Lord at last, and to give it in with joy and not with grief. Then shall he say to each of us, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## LECTURE LXXXV.

## LUKE XVI. 9-13.

“And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. 10. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. 11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13. No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

HAVING spoken the parable of the unjust steward, who manifested so much contrivance and zeal in forwarding his temporal interest, and having founded, on that parable the short, but deep, comprehensive, and instructive remark, that “the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light” (for, however inferior their object, worldly men generally pursue that object with more ingenuity of contrivance, more union, more earnestness, and more perseverance, than believers employ in the pursuit of salvation)—our Lord proceeds to apply the parable, at greater length, in the verses now read. In obvious allusion to the very improper way in which “the unjust steward,” or, “the steward of unrighteousness,” endeavoured to make friends of his master's debtors, that they might assist him when he should be turned out of his office, Christ now says to his disciples, “*Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*”

The only passages of Scripture in which the word “mammon” occurs, are this now under consideration, in which it is introduced thrice, and that in Matthew, 6th chapter and 24th verse. The learned are not altogether decided as to the origin of the word. Some derive it from a Hebrew word,\* which signifies to trust; in this view, it may signify any thing in which men are ready to trust, and this is especially

the case with regard to riches. Others consider it as a proper Syriac word, for riches, or money. This is the word which is used in the Syriac in Exod. xxi. 30: "If there be laid on him a sum of money," *mamona* or *mammon*, "then he shall give for the ransom of his soul whatsoever is laid upon him." Augustine mentions that "gain, in the Carthaginian language was called *mammon*."\* It is generally understood, too, that there was an idol called *Mammon*, answering to *Plutus*, who was worshipped by the heathen, as the god of wealth. At all events, it is clear that the word *mammon* here signifies riches. As to worldly riches being called, in the 9th verse, "the *mammon* of unrighteousness," and, in the 11th verse, "the unrighteous *mammon*," this may perhaps have some reference to the sin which is so often connected with them, in acquiring them, and holding them, or abusing them, and, especially, in setting the heart on them. "They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For, the love of money is the root of all evil: which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." But, as the *mammon* is here said to be "unrighteous," in the way of contrast with the "true" riches, the description seems intended chiefly to suggest the unsatisfying, uncertain, and deceitful nature of worldly wealth, contrasted with the satisfying, certain, and solid nature of spiritual and saving blessings. Unrighteousness is mentioned as opposed to truth in other passages, thus: "Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness;"† and again, charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." We are told of "the deceitfulness of riches" "choking" the word; and we are cautioned against trusting in "uncertain riches." Riches are, indeed, proverbially uncertain. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." They often altogether elude the pursuit; and, when they are acquired, they fail to give the satisfaction which was expected from them.‡

The exhortation to "make friends of," or rather, by, or with, "the *mammon* of unrighteousness," does not refer to

\* "Lucrum punice *mammon* dicitur."

† Rom. ii. 8; 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

‡ "Quod si dolosi refulserit spes nummi."—*Persius*.

ill-gotten gain; for, that ought to be immediately restored; but it refers to all worldly possessions which we hold in a lawful way; and the way to make friends with them is to use them aright—that is, neither to waste them extravagantly, nor to hoard them penuriously, but allowing for what the maintenance of our station in life and prudence require, to bestow them liberally in works of piety and charity. Such an appropriation of them will make friends for us—friends, not only for time, but for eternity. This, with reverence be it spoken, will make even God himself our friend. We must not, indeed, suppose that the pious and benevolent use of our property could make God our friend in the way of merit, or purchase any favour at his hand; on the contrary, we must look to the Saviour alone for the ground of our acceptance. For any thing that we could do, or give, our salvation would be hopeless; every favour we can receive is free; and should any one of us dream of meriting salvation by the use he makes of his money, he might well consider himself as thus rebuked: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for, thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” But, as addressed to true disciples, to those who are already “accepted in the Beloved,” these words come evangelically, and with the greatest force. “Ye are my friends,” saith Christ, “if ye do whatsoever I command you.” And he, of course, is the friend of those who are his friends; for, friendship implies a mutual tie. The Lord cannot but have complacency in those who obey him in any department of duty, and, in particular, in those who “honour him with their substance, and with the first-fruits of all their increase.”

Make to yourselves friends by the right use of your worldly wealth, “that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. “When ye fail,”\* that is, when ye die; for so this word, like the word used in the original, sometimes signifies, as well as a corresponding word in the Hebrew. “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of

\* Ἐκλιπῆσι. Ἐκλιπῶν μοι φαίνεται ἡ ψυχή.—Xen. Cyr. viii. Ἐν ἰομφαίῳ καὶ ἐν λιμῷ ἐκλείψεται.—Jer. xlii. 22. *Septuagint.*

men."—"My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." The everlasting habitations, here spoken of, are evidently heaven, the rest which remaineth for the people of God. "We have here no continuing city; but we seek one to come."—"For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It may be that the phrase, "they may receive you," is merely a Hebraism for "ye shall be received." So, a similar form of expression, in the original, is rendered, in Luke xii. 20: "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee,"—more literally, "they shall require thy soul of thee."\* If, however, we are to consider this phrase as pointing to the particular persons who are to receive the righteous after their death, they must be the inhabitants of heaven. The saints, who are there before them, especially, those of them whom they knew and relieved, will doubtless welcome them home. The holy angels will also joyfully receive them: for, we are told in a subsequent part of this chapter, that Lazarus, when he died, "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." The dying believer is encouraged, after the example of David and Christ, to commend and commit his spirit into his heavenly Father's hands. He is also taught, after the example of Stephen, to say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." That the Redeemer will receive his followers into everlasting habitations, he himself thus expressly declares: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." We are even told the words with which he will welcome them, with an express reference to the good use they made of their substance: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." "Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Our Lord proceeds to say, "*He that is faithful in that*

\* See also Rev. xii. 6, xvi. 15.

*which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.*" This verse not only paves the way for what our Lord afterwards says of the "true," or spiritual, riches, which are "much," or valuable, in comparison of the unrighteous and deceitful earthly riches, but also shows that the exhortation which he has given before is applicable, not only to those who are very rich, and have very extensive transactions to manage, but to all persons whatever, seeing every man has something committed to his trust, however small, which he is bound to administer faithfully. The statement here made is agreeable to what might be expected, and generally takes place, in transactions between man and man. The principle and the habit of faithfulness in very small matters form the best security for faithfulness in those which are more important; whereas, though all are not so daring, it is well known that those who give way to habits of petty dishonesty, or of any kind of less heinous transgression, generally become worse and worse, and venture at last on deeds at which they would at first have shuddered. One of the most striking examples of this is found in the history of Judas Iscariot. "He was a thief, and carried the bag," or common purse of Christ and his disciples, from which, it is to be inferred, he was guilty of many petty peculations, almost without remorse. And what was the result? The spirit of mammon gained on him, till it led him to consummate his guilt, by betraying and selling the Lord of glory, for thirty pieces of silver. How conscientious, then, ought every man to be "not to go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter, however small! for, besides the consideration that the least injustice is, in itself, a crime that infers condemnation, when the line of integrity is at all transgressed, the temptation to venture farther becomes very great, and it is impossible to say how far a man may go. But, though this saying thus applies to absolute dishonesty in men's dealings with each other, it is here spoken with a more immediate reference to their accountableness for their transactions to their heavenly Master: and in this view, there are many ways, besides what is commonly accounted dishonesty, in which they may be unjust, unfaithful, and guilty, in the management of their property, and other worldly concerns. If they waste their substance on positively sinful or useless objects, or, if they withhold from pious and charitable purposes what duty requires them to contribute,



they act unjustly—they rob God and the poor. In every thing of this nature, the Christian should exercise much consideration and caution. Nay, the spirit of this saying is applicable to every kind of iniquity; for, the man who is void of principle in one department, is generally void of principle in others; and all sin is “like the letting out of water”—when it finds vent at all, it usually widens the breach, and increases in volume and strength, till it sweeps on in an unrestrained current. As we have any regard, then, to our safety, let us be aware of our danger in this way; and let us, in God’s strength, resist the beginnings of evil. Let us not do what we call a little evil, lest we be emboldened to do much. Let us not trifle with sin, lest it overwhelm us. Let us not begin to dally with the hideous serpent, lest he artfully entwine himself around us, and crush us to death in his coils.

In farther applying the subject, our Lord adds, “*If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*” We have already noticed that the unrighteous mammon is contrasted with the true riches, inasmuch as the former, or worldly riches, are uncertain, unsatisfactory, and deceitful; and the latter, namely, spiritual riches, or the blessings of salvation, are real,\* certain, substantial, and permanent. These enrich the soul, are independent on outward circumstances, and are everlasting. Wisdom says,† “Riches and honour are with me, yea, *durable* riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.” They are rich indeed who, though they may be poor in this world, are “rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him.” Now, when our Lord says, If ye have not been faithful in the management of worldly property, who will intrust you with the true riches? he may be understood as intimating, that those who are not conscientious in earthly concerns, are very unfit persons to be intrusted with the office of “stewards of the mysteries of God,” that is, with the ministry of the gospel. The lesson, however, seems to be more comprehensive, and may be stated thus—If men are unfaithful in worldly things, they have no reason to expect that the blessings of salvation will be conferred on them.

\* Ἡ τὰν ὄντων ὕψων κτήσεις διὰ ψαύσεως οὐ περιγίνονται, “The acquisition of true, or real, possessions, comes not from sloth.”—*Demophilus’ Sentences.*

† Prov. viii. 18

Then it is added, "*And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*" In the exposition of this verse, it may be observed, first of all, that the eleventh and twelfth verses form one of those parallelisms which frequently occur in Scripture, the corresponding clauses of each verse being mutually illustrative of each other. In this way, the phrase, "that which is another man's," in the first clause of the twelfth verse, corresponds with "the unrighteous mammon," or worldly riches, in the first clause of the eleventh; and, "that which is your own," in the last part of the twelfth verse, corresponds with "the true riches," or, the blessings of salvation, in the last part of the eleventh. Thus, the general meaning of this twelfth verse is plain. Still, the form of expression employed requires some explanation. "That which is another man's," is, when literally rendered, "that which is another's,"\* or that which belongs to another, the word "man's," being supplied by our translators, not happily. Worldly riches are not a man's own, in the strict sense; they belong to God, and are merely a man's in trust. They are not abiding; they are not an everlasting possession, in any sense; and, even when a man has them, they do not constitute his character—they are, as we may say, foreign to him. The true riches, or the blessings of salvation, however, are a man's *own*. They constitute his character, they are his peculiar, proper treasure, and they are given to him in perpetuity. They are the "one thing needful" for a man, and "the good part," or portion, "which shall not be taken from him." Believers possess "the unsearchable riches of Christ" here; and there is reserved for them, in heaven, "an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Now, our Lord says, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's,"

\* Ἄλλοτριον. Το ἄλλοτριον and το ἡμῶν, *alienum* and *proprium*, or, *suum*, are contrasted, somewhat in this way, by several Greek and Latin authors. Thus, *Θαρεῖν χρη πρὶς τῇ αὐτοῦ ψυχῇ ἄνδρα, ὅστις ἐν τῇ βίῃ τας μὲν ἄλλας ἡδονὰς τας πρὶς τὸ σῶμα καὶ τοὺς κοσμοὺς ἵασσι χαιρεῖν, ὡς ἄλλοτριους, τι ὄντας, καὶ πλεον θάτερον ἡγησαμένους ἀπεργαζίσθαι. Τας δὲ πρὶς τὸ μανθάνειν ἰσπουδάσει τι, καὶ κοσμήσας τὴν ψυχὴν οὐκ ἄλλοτριον ἄλλα τῇ αὐτῆς ποτμῇ, σωφροσύνη τι καὶ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀνδρεία καὶ ἰλιθυρία καὶ ἀληθεία.*—*Plato*, *Phædo*, § 63, ad finem. "*Nihil horum, quæ circa ipsum sunt, suum judicat, sed ut commodatis utitur peregrinus et properana.*"—*Seneca*, *Ep.* 120. "*Parva munera duntaxa, locupletia non propria esse consueverunt.*"—*Nepos*, *Thrasyl.* "*Nam propriæ telluris herum natura neque illum, Nec me, nec quemquam statuit.*"—*Horace*.

or, in the management and use of worldly riches, which are not your own for ever, but which are foreign to you, and temporary, "who shall give you that which is," or rather, shall be, "your own" by a sure tenure, and in everlasting possession? Certainly, God will not do it; and none else can. If you have embezzled and mismanaged what was committed to you in trust, how can you expect to receive an estate in perpetuity? If, as some suppose, landlords sometimes rewarded their stewards for their fidelity by making over to them a portion of their estate, that would account exactly for the form of expression in this verse. At all events, Christ here teaches that it is utterly vain for any to expect everlasting happiness who have been unfaithful and disobedient, during their life on earth.

Our Lord concludes his application of the parable of the unjust steward by repeating the very solemn declaration which he had formerly made, in his sermon on the mount.\* "*No servant,*" no domestic, "*can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else, he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" It is possible, no doubt, for a man to render some service, not only to two persons, but to a great number of persons; but, no man can be, in the strict and full sense of the word, a servant to more than one master at a time; there must, at least, be such a union of will and command, as renders the authority under which he acts substantially one. It is quite obvious, especially, that it is altogether impossible to serve two masters when their interests and commands interfere with and oppose each other. Such an incompatibility exists between the service of God and the service of mammon, or any other supreme object of regard. Whoever, or whatever, chiefly engages our thoughts, interests our affections, and influences our actions, may be called our master. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" The servant who attempts to serve two earthly masters, will probably soon begin to love the one, and to dislike the other; or he will, "at least, attend to the one, and neglect the other."† So it is as to religion and the world, God and mammon. It is not said that a man cannot serve God and be possessed of riches; but it is said that he cannot serve God and serve riches, that is, have his

\* Matt. vi. 24.

† Campbell's rendering.

heart supremely set on them, or trust in them. Here there is a complete incompatibility; for, "covetousness is idolatry." A worldly man will make religion give place to his temporal interest; and even his very profession of religion, if he have any, will be most studiously made subservient to his worldly designs: whereas, a truly pious man will make his temporal concerns give place to his spiritual, and will make all his business and all his success in some way subservient to the salvation of his soul, and the glory of God. It is vain to dream of a successful conjunction of religion with wilful worldliness, or sin of any description. The strange people who came into the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel who were carried captive, endeavoured to unite the worship of Jehovah with idolatry; "they feared the Lord, and served their own gods," and "their graven images," vainly supposing that they could please the Lord, when they acted in direct opposition to his command to serve him alone.\* He cannot accept such services: on the contrary, he looks on the attempt at such a union as most insulting to his holy name. "As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols."† The Lord threatened to cut off, not only those whose customs were altogether idolatrous, but also those that "swore by the Lord, and that swore by Malcham."‡ Let us all remember the Divine command, as quoted by our Redeemer, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and him only shalt thou serve."

This passage suggests two exhortations, in conclusion,

First. *Be exhorted to be careful, on real Christian principles, to lay out your substance in the conscientious and truly profitable way here enjoined.* The exhortation is thus studiously worded, with the view, both of convicting those of you who neither are in the state, nor cherish the principles, in which it is possible for you to employ your substance in the advantageous way here pointed out, and of stirring up those of you who are in that state, and cherish those principles, to beware of selfishness, and, in ministrations of piety and benevolence, to be generous, very generous, according to your means.

Is there, then, one now present (and the probability is that there are several)—is there one who is very liberal

\* 2 Kings xvii. 24 to end.

† Ezek. xx. 39.

‡ Zeph. i. 5.

with his substance, but is not prompted to that liberality by a supreme and abiding regard to the will and glory of God?—whose heart prompts him to a natural sympathy for his neighbour in poverty and other outward afflictions, but who enters not into his spiritual concerns, and is a stranger to the love of God and of Christ?—who can say kind things of and to his fellow-creatures, but who can use irreverently the name of God?—who gives alms, but such alms as do not ascend on high in conjunction with heart-felt prayers?—in short, who is, in many respects, a generous, and what the world calls, a good-hearted man, but who has not submitted himself to the righteousness of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith, nor been enlightened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, and who is, therefore, not a Christian? To him we would say—Your liberality is very useful in relieving the wants of men; and your character, viewed in reference merely to your fellow-creatures, is, in several points, very respectable, commendable, and amiable. If the desire of human praise be your great motive, verily you have your reward, for you have that praise; or if it be a feeling of natural sympathy that chiefly actuates you, still you have your reward in the gratification of that feeling. Nay, however inadequate your principles may be, Scripture seems to intimate that God's providence will repay you in some way, according to the complexion and value of these principles, in the present world; and we may even say, in reference to your relation to God, that your guilt is less heavy than it would be, if, to the sin of impiety to God, you were adding the sin of cruelty to man. Thus, on the whole, even you cannot, in your present state, employ your substance so profitably, as in actions agreeable to the letter of the Divine law. Farther than this, however, we cannot go. More than this we dare not say. We cannot sacrifice one iota of the truth, though it were to gain thousands to the funds of charity. No; these thousands could then bring no blessing with them, for they would be the price of blood.

And here, let none say, in the carnal policy of their hearts, "You had better let that alone. Your only object in speaking on such a subject as this, should be to get us to contribute as much money as possible in charity; and with this view, your most prudent plan is to keep us all well satisfied with ourselves." We totally deny that raising money either is, or ought to be, the only, or even the chief,

object of such an exercise as this. In conjunction with prayer and praise, our chief object is to preach the glorious gospel, with the view of promoting the honour of God, the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers; and to this great object, the collection of charity for the poor is merely an appendage, though certainly an important, and, for the cause of Christianity, a very honourable appendage. We affirm, too, what is too plain to require any proof, that, taking the value of the soul and of eternity into view, no result of a pecuniary nature, however great, could be nearly so important as that of even one misled immortal creature being brought to distinguish between truth and error, and to cast himself on the mercy, and submit himself heartily to the government, of God—to pass from death to life. But how can such a result be at all expected, if the truth be concealed or obscured? What! cry, Peace, peace, where there is no peace? Speak smooth things, in order to gain a sinister end? Heal the hurt of the daughter of the people slightly? Speak in such a strain either of positive error, or of improper omission, as might lead any one to suppose that almsgiving can atone for sin, or make up for any deficiency, or be a ground of acceptance with God, or stand in the place of faith, as interesting in the merits of Christ, or be, of itself, and unaccompanied with other marks, a sufficient evidence of a state of grace, or have any influence in securing the safety of the ungodly and unconverted in the great day?—God forbid! That be far from us. Nor would such an unfaithful procedure be, after all, the true way to gain most fully the end in view; for, all just theory, and, with a few exceptions, all correct observation, lead to the conclusion, that, for the steady prosecution of all temporal and spiritual charities, the best foundation is laid, when men are brought heartily to receive the gospel, and experimentally to “know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.” To be very plain, for the affair is too momentous to be spoken of mincingly, or with any concealment—if, my friends, you are affable, sympathizing, and benevolent, this is so far well, much better than if you were morose, unfeeling, and niggardly. But then, however this may be, you were, without exception, born in a state of condemnation and corruption, and in many things you have all actually transgressed. If you have not had that condemnation removed through the faith of Christ,

you are lying under it still, for in no other way can it be removed. Moreover, except you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God, you can never be received into everlasting habitations. Without holiness you can never see the Lord. Consider these things; and may God give you a saving understanding of them. Thus, and thus alone, can either your state be safe, or your charity be Christian charity, and correspond with this scriptural standard, "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

To those of you who are Christ's disciples indeed, and who are living in the belief and obedience of the gospel, this exhortation should come with peculiar force. See that you turn to the very best account the advantages, in point of worldly circumstances, with which you are favoured, whether they be great or small. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." Though this vice cannot reign, it may, and often does, exercise some influence over persons of some true piety; and then it is always very much noticed by the world, and very hurtful to religion. It is also very hurtful to themselves; for undutifulness, in this respect, is punished with less abundant communications of the more valuable blessings of grace. When they are partially unfaithful in that which is another's, in worldly wealth, which is but lent, and which is foreign to them, they are, on that account, partially sufferers in that true spiritual wealth which is their own in everlasting possession. Beware, then, of grasping and hoarding avarice. Do not fail to use with freedom what God has given you for your proper support in life. Yet do not run into the extreme of lavishness, for that would be positively sinful in itself, as well as prevent the possibility of much good which you might otherwise do. Retrench, if retrenchment be practicable, rather than want the means of charity. Do not suppose that none but the rich are concerned in this exhortation. The principle may, and should, be acted on by persons of very limited incomes. The disciples, to whom our Lord originally addressed the exhortation, "Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness," had, surely, in general, very small possessions, when, being at first in lowly stations, they could even say, "Lord, we have left all and followed thee." If you have first of all a willing mind, and then do what you can, you will be accepted according to what you have, and not according to what you have not. As a motive to

generosity, consider how soon you must "fail"—that is, die, and part with all you have. You brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that you can carry nothing out of it. There is, indeed, in perfect consistence with this declaration, one way in which, in a certain sense, you may carry your property away with you, a way too little thought of, and that is, the way of disposing of it now, in a truly Christian manner, on truly Christian principles. What you give to Christ's cause, and to the poor for Christ's sake, should be set down, not to the account of loss, but to the account of gain; for it is thus deposited in a safe investment, and secured to you for ever. Be encouraged, also, not only to do something, but to do much, in this way, remembering that if you sow sparingly, you shall reap but sparingly, whereas if you sow plentifully, you shall reap also plentifully. We appeal to you as rational beings, and call on you to act wisely for yourselves. We appeal to you as professing the gospel of Christ, enjoying its blessings, and desiring its advancement, and we beseech you to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in this way; for, "the administration of this service shall not only supply the want of the saints, but be abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; while, by the experiment of this ministration, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men." We appeal to those of you who are rich to do comparatively much in this way. This is the injunction of Paul to Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." We appeal to every one of you, habitually to do, in this way, liberally, according as God has prospered you. Without doubt, you shall have a reward of grace; for, what but of grace can it be, when you will be only giving to God of his own? "You shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."—"He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."—"Lay not up for yourselves," then, "treasures upon earth;" "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."



The other exhortation which this passage suggests is this, *Let all of you who desire the salvation of your souls, ever remember the impossibility of serving both God and mammon, and be decided for God.* Do not imagine that you can please both the world and God. Do not imagine that you can set your affections both on things on earth, and on things in heaven. You cannot, at once, live to vanity and covetousness, and live to holiness and the Lord. Beware of aiming at two things so incompatible. If you do, you may lose both objects, and you will certainly lose the more important of them—you will lose your own souls. “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”—“How long,” then, “halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”—“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;” and say, “As for us we will serve the Lord.”

## LECTURE LXXXVI.

## LUKE XVI. 14-18.

“And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. 15. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. 16. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. 17. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. 18. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”

THESE verses follow the parable of the unjust steward, and the instructions founded on it in reference to “the mammon of unrighteousness,” or deceitful worldly riches. Our Lord had been exhorting his disciples to take a lesson from the men of the world, who, however inferior the end they proposed to themselves might be, were wiser than the children of light, in the ingenuity of contrivance, earnestness, and perseverance, with which they prosecuted that end. He had also been telling them, that the most profitable way in which they could invest their property, was to use it aright, especially in deeds of piety and charity; he had been speaking, too, of the inferiority of worldly riches to the true riches—the satisfying and lasting blessings of salvation; and he had, finally, been declaring the impossibility of uniting true religion with worldliness and sin—the impossibility of serving God and mammon. In this immediate connexion, the evangelist goes on to say, “*And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things; and they derided him.*”

That there were good men among the Pharisees is not to be doubted; but that the great majority of the sect were very much the reverse, is everywhere asserted. Luke here declares that they were “covetous.” They were greedy of gain; and the great end at which they aimed, even in their professedly religious observances, was to promote their temporal interest. So bent were they on acquiring, that they scrupled not to employ fraud, injustice, and oppression, to

accomplish their purpose, wearing, all the while, the cloak of hypocritical profession. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" saith our Lord,\* "for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore, ye shall receive the greater damnation." When these hypocritical worldlings heard Jesus opposing all their maxims, by discoursing against covetousness, and inculcating spirituality of affection and pursuit, "they derided him." The word implies exceedingly contemptuous treatment. They could not answer him properly, and, therefore, they had recourse to mockery and insult. In this were partly fulfilled the words of prophecy, "I am a reproach of men, and despised of the people:"—"He is despised and rejected of men." But this is only one specimen of what is generally characteristic of sinners. It always has been, it now is, and it ever will be, common for those who will not benefit by the preaching of awakening truth, to deride it. Various parts of it excite their mockery and rage, but especially those which strike most directly at their favourite errors and sins. The contempt which they express, though frequently, is not always, really felt by them; for there is often a monitor within them, bearing testimony to the truth, while they are showing scornful audacity outwardly, in the hope of bearing down those whom they dislike, and of imposing on others. The number who manifest this scorn, partly pretended, and partly real, is great, and it is not easy to determine which is the more heinous. Selfish and worldly men, especially, in whom the present greatly predominates over the future, when they hear preachers, or private Christians, speaking of the superiority of spiritual to temporal things, and of the necessity of renouncing the world, very generally deride them as hypocrites, who, with all their pretensions, are as fond of the world as others; or as weak and enthusiastic visionaries, who are ignorant of human affairs, and neglect the substantial for the imaginary.

Various passages of Scripture prove that God's messengers have been thus disliked and derided. "A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him; neither will he go unto the wise," says Solomon.—"I am as one mocked of his neighbour," says Job; "the just upright man is laughed to scorn."—"I am in derision daily," says Jeremiah, "every one mocketh me." When the Athenians heard, from Paul, of the resurrection of the dead, "some mocked." Many

\* Matt. xxiii. 14.

of the ancient worthies "had trial of cruel mockings." The words of Peter are always, in some degree, fulfilling, "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" If, then, we are to be faithful, we must expect something of this treatment, according to the circumstances in which we are placed. Let us study not to deserve it by imprudence and rashness; but let us not be surprised, or discouraged, if it should come on us, notwithstanding all our care. Let us consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds. The shameful conduct of the Pharisees, on this occasion, should also be considered as warning all scoffers of their sin and danger. God may bear with such despisers for a time, but he will visit them heavily at last. Of the Jews, it is said,\* "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." Let all who are ready to scoff at the Word take warning, and forbear to provoke the Lord. "Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong."—"If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scorner, thou alone shalt bear it."—"Wisdom crieth, How long will the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof."—"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

Though the Pharisees thus derided Christ, it was not he, but they themselves, that deserved to be despised; and therefore, without imitating their contemptuous manner, he addressed them in the language of well merited and severe rebuke. "*And he said unto them, Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.*" They justified themselves before men, that is, they declared themselves to be just; they assumed, and constantly asserted, the character of righteous persons before the people. It is true that real believers, like Abraham, are justified in the sight of men, or proved to be in an

\* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15.

accepted state, by their works; but our Lord is here speaking of a quite different thing—he is reprehending the Pharisees for an ostentatious display of pretended goodness, and especially, for defending every part of their conduct, and claiming to themselves a high degree of sanctity, whatever their real character might be. They denied the charges which Christ brought against them; and they laboured to impress on the public mind an idea of their eminent piety notwithstanding their covetousness and worldliness. The lawyer, “willing (desiring) to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?”\* The foolish youth said, “All these” commandments “have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?” Our Lord declared that the scribes and Pharisees “did all their works to be seen of men.”† We may also observe, that, with this excessive desire to justify themselves in the sight of men, there was united, in the Pharisees, the desire to justify themselves in the sight of God, or a spirit of self-righteousness. “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men,” was the language of the Pharisee.

Now, we are here reminded that it ought not to be our object to justify ourselves in the sight of men, in this sense, or to show off and proclaim our own goodness before the world. If, indeed, we are misrepresented, in a way plainly injurious to ourselves and to the truth, it will be our duty to try to clear up our character, and to put men right, like Job, who said to those who accused him of gross hypocrisy and wilful sin, “God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.” But, let us beware of making the thought that men will see and applaud us the main-spring of our actions, otherwise we shall have no reward of God. Let it be with us a very small thing that we should be judged of man’s judgment; and let it be enough for us to know that God sees and will judge us. In the sight of men, let our works speak for us, rather than our words. And, as for justification in the sight of God, let us ever remember the apostolic declaration, that “by deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight,” and that if we are in this sense to be justified at all—that is, pardoned, accepted, and entitled to eternal life—it must be “freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

\* Luke x. 29.

† Matt. xxiii. 5.

whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood."

"Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts." With regard to these Pharisees, this intimated that, whatever might be their outward appearance, and however they might impose on their fellow-creatures an opinion of their excellence, God not only knew their hearts, but knew them to be false and impure. On another occasion Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." More generally, however, we are here reminded that God knows the hearts of all men, and estimates their character accordingly. When Samuel looked on Eliab, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." So, in Jeremiah,\* "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." How little, then, can any of us gain by deceiving men, when we cannot impose upon God! Let us remember that he knows our inmost thoughts; and let us think of his coming to judge us, when he will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Lord grant that we may have new, honest, and pure hearts, that we may love and serve him in sincerity and truth. Lord grant that we may savingly know the God of our fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if we seek him, he will be found of us; but if we forsake him, he will cast us off for ever.

"For," adds our Lord, "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." It was so as to these Pharisees, whose counterfeit goodness was admired and extolled by the generality of their ignorant countrymen, but odious to the Searcher of hearts, who saw through the veil that covered their inward baseness. More

\* Jer. xvii. 10.

generally, it holds true, in many instances, that what is highly esteemed among men of the world is lightly esteemed by God, and, of course, should be lightly esteemed by his people. The assumed character of sanctity, for example, in the midst of actual wickedness, for which the Pharisees were so notorious, though it may be applauded by some, is truly worthless and despicable in itself, and offensive to God. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord."—"Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth."—"When ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil, learn to do well." The same may be said of covetousness; for the passion of acquiring gain, provided it do not appear in the very worst form of plain injustice, or excessive parsimony, is admired and applauded by the world, as the first point of human wisdom, if words, and especially if actions, have any meaning. Men praise each other, when, in this sense, they "do well" for themselves; and yet the Lord pronounces the love of money to be the root of all evil. "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth."\* Pride, too, if not offensively overbearing to themselves, is admired by men of the world, and is a favourite word in their vocabulary; and yet we read in Scripture,† "Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord." The same holds true of the thirst for human glory, the ambition of conquest, and the desire of revenge; for each of which many have been enrolled in the list of heroes, and extolled to the very skies, by the world, though they were, doubtless, an abomination to a holy God, and a curse to our suffering race. So, on the contrary, some things which are despised by men are highly esteemed by God; and some persons who are disliked and vilified by the world, are loved and honoured by the Lord. Men of the world often despise and trample on the meek and lowly, but "a meek and quiet spirit" is truly ornamental, and, "in the sight of God, of great price." We are told that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." How different, then, in almost every point, the judgment of God, and the judgment of the world, as to what constitutes true excellence! Let this fact remind us not to be swayed by the opinion of

\* Ps. x. 3.

† Prov. xvi. 5.

worldly men as to what we should admire in others, or prosecute most keenly for ourselves, but to be careful to form a correct estimate, according to the unerring standard of God's Word.

Verse 16 : "*The law and the prophets were until John : since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*" Very similar to this passage is the following, in Matthew, 11th chapter, from the 12th verse : "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John." The law and the prophets are here put for the whole Old Testament, as in various other places. The books of the Old Testament were the sole guide in religion till the mission of John the Baptist. He occupied, as it were, an intermediate station between the Old and New Testaments; and the burden of his preaching was, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom of God, or of heaven, is put for the gospel dispensation. Of this dispensation the Baptist was the harbinger, or forerunner; and Jesus Christ and his apostles actually introduced, and more fully and clearly unfolded it. The last three verses of the Old Testament may be justly considered as fixing, and foretelling, what is stated as matter of fact in the verse now under consideration. "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb, for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." What our Lord here said will appear the more appropriate, when it is remembered he was addressing himself to Pharisees, who professed a high veneration for the law and the prophets, and who ought, therefore, to have been prepared, by their contents, to receive Christ, as well as his forerunner.

Since the time of John's preaching "every man presseth" into the kingdom of God. This is a description of the success of that preaching, in the general and deep interest which it excited. It excited a very general concern about salvation. "Every man," though a term of universality, is plainly here, as in some other places of Scripture, to be understood as intended to apply to kinds, and not to indi-



viduals. It was not the case that every human being who heard the gospel preached was impressed by it; but it is certain that a very great number of persons, of all descriptions, did flock to hear it, and were deeply interested. There went out to John "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Among these, there were self-righteous Pharisees, and infidel Sadducees, and publicans and soldiers; in a word, persons of all sorts, and of the most opposite and unlikely characters. A similar general interest also attended the preaching of Christ himself; for we frequently read of "great multitudes" following him. The success, however, consisted, not only in the number of those who sought the kingdom of God, but in the manner in which they sought it: they *pressed* into it. In the passage already quoted, this idea is conveyed in these words: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The manner in which men then sought admission into the kingdom of God, or the blessings of gospel salvation, was like that in which men eagerly press through a crowd, and all opposing difficulties, to get into a place into which they are very desirous to enter; or like the determination, courage, and struggle, with which an army attack and force their entrance into a city.

Intending, however, to return to this point in conclusion, let me, without saying more on it here, request your attention to the connexion and meaning of the two remaining verses of this passage. Having spoken of the law and the prophets as being until John, and as intended, in a certain sense, to give place to the gospel, our Lord would not allow the Pharisees to suppose that he thereby undervalued the law and the prophets. Instead of setting them aside from the place their Author intended them to occupy, the gospel established and honoured them in the most signal manner. "*It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.*" That is, it cannot possibly fail. The visible heaven and earth that now are shall perish and vanish away, but not so the word of God. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall endure for ever."\* As Jesus said, in his sermon on the mount, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one

\* Isa. xi. 8.

tittle,\* shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." As for the prophets, their predictions are accomplished, and accomplishing, in Christ and his kingdom, according to their appointed time. We shall do well, therefore, to mark their meaning and fulfilment, for the confirmation of our faith; for "the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." As to the law, in so far as it was ceremonial and typical, it found its perfect fulfilment in Christ, as the antitype and substance. And in so far as it was moral, instead of setting aside, he fulfilled and established it, by vindicating it from false glosses; by perfectly obeying it himself, in the room of sinners, that he might become the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth; and by leaving it in full force as a rule of life to his followers—nay, by bringing them to delight in it after the inward man, and to obey it in the outward conduct. Let us note and improve all these points; and, especially, let us study practically to demonstrate the truth of the apostle's words, "Do we, then, make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

Having thus declared, in general terms, his regard for the law, Jesus specifies an instance in which the Pharisees, with all their pretensions, were very lax, but on which he held and inculcated just and strict views. "*Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.*" Some customs, such as slavery, polygamy, and divorce for slighter reasons than unfaithfulness, appear to have been tolerated by God, for a time, in order to prevent greater evils, though they were not thereby approved, far less enjoined; and certain laws were enacted with regard to them, which tended to mitigate their evils. That Christianity will ultimately put an end to slavery altogether, though it bears with it in certain circumstances, is not to be doubted. It absolutely prohibits polygamy. As to divorce—it restrains it within narrow limits, permitting it only for the cause of positive unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. It is quite plain, from other declarations of our Lord, where his meaning is more fully brought out, that he is here to be understood as forbidding

\* ἰωτα ἐν ἡ μιᾷ κεφαλαίᾳ. Iota, or Yod, the smallest letter of the alphabet. *Κεφαλαίᾳ*, in reference to the Hebrew, seems to signify an apex, or corner, of a letter, a very slight variation of which, in several cases, changes the letter, and, of course, the word and the sense altogether.

divorce, except for adultery. There were two parties, on this subject, among the Jews—the followers of Hillel, whose views were lax, and the followers of Shammah, whose views were strict.\* The law of Moses with regard to it, which is found at the beginning of the 24th chapter of Deuteronomy, and which left some latitude, was, however, stretched by most of the Jews, so as to encourage very loose ideas of the obligation of the marriage bond, and to give them a pretence of authority to divorce their wives for the most trifling reasons. Polygamy, though still reckoned lawful, had, by this time, in a great measure ceased, in fact, among the Jews; and now the Head and Lawgiver of the Church brings back the whole law of marriage, as nearly as possible, to its original state. Had men continued innocent, the bond would have been absolutely indissoluble; for, according to that supposition, unfaithfulness would never have occurred to violate it, nor would the icy hand of death have come in between the parties to separate them. As it is now, however, death cuts the knot that binds the most pious, the most faithful, and the most affectionate, and terminates the marriage connexion for ever; “for, in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” And, alas! as it is now, there is sometimes committed a crime which is more bitter to the deeply sensitive and injured partner, of either sex, than death; and which, being a direct violation of the chief condition of the marriage contract, virtually destroys it, in so far, at least, as that the injured party has a right, if so disposed, to insist on an actual divorce; which, if insisted on, must be regularly and solemnly gone about, and, as a safeguard against taking the step rashly, must never be recalled. The following passage, in Matthew, 19th chapter from the 3d verse, expresses our Lord’s will fully on this point: “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He who made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore, they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give

\* Whitby on Matt. xix. 3-9.

a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her who is put away doth commit adultery."

Sin has deranged the ordinance of God, and introduced man's heaviest trials, through the medium of what would otherwise have always been his sweetest comforts; but the gospel is calculated to re-model his affairs, and to bring them back to a state of happiness and peace. Happy indeed are they, who, having embraced its great salvation, are taught by its precepts, to live together as heirs of the grace of God, so that their prayers are not hindered. This will teach them to look on their union as God's ordinance, and to regulate their conduct to each other, not by their own caprice, but by his holy will. Then they will love each other, as they love themselves; and "they will no more desire a separation on every gust of passion, or incidental uneasiness, than they would desire to have a limb cut off, or to have their flesh mangled every time they feel pain or weariness," which is only resorted to "as a desperate and most painful remedy, in the case of an incurable gangrene."\* Thus, they will find that their happiness and duty are one, and that there will exist between them the closest union of interests, cares, and enjoyments, till they are parted by death.

But, let me conclude with calling your attention to that point of universal concern, *the necessity of pressing into the kingdom of God*. It was thus that men sought its blessings of old; and it is thus that men ought to seek, and thus only that any of you can obtain, its blessings now. It is true that you are not to suppose that any thing remains for you to do, in the way of meriting the Divine favour. That work is already finished; and you must beware of pressing on in a legal and self-righteous spirit. Yet much remains to be done, in the way of your getting actual admission into a state of grace, or, at least, of your being fully prepared for the kingdom of glory. There are too many, no doubt, who trust in the pains they take, and make a righteousness of their own endeavours; but, generally speaking, the more earnest men become in the prosecution of salvation, the less

\* Scott on Matt. xix. 1-12.

likely are they to trust in themselves. It is quite common for persons who are exceedingly indifferent about religion, to be quite well satisfied with themselves; but, when any are truly awakened, all their former false foundations are shaken and demolished. At the same time, when any are under such concern, they ought to be very careful to avoid wasting their thoughts on matters of doubtful disputation, and to give themselves, with all steadiness, to the grand duties of faith and repentance.

It is certainly your duty to press into the kingdom of God; and it is necessary to do so, if you would obtain admission. But, what is implied in pressing into the kingdom of God? It implies an *earnest desire* to be saved. Let salvation, then, be the object of your most anxious wish. Let it be the one thing needful, the only thing necessary, in your estimation; and let the language of your hearts be, This one thing have we desired, and this will we seek after. It implies *diligence and earnestness of actual endeavour*. You must not stop with mere wishes; but you must actually exert yourselves in the use of the appointed means of deep meditation, searching the Scriptures, and attending on the preaching of the Word. And all these endeavours must be accompanied with earnest prayer; which is called "a wrestling" with God, and in which you ought, as it were, to say, with Jacob, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." It implies, also, *breaking through and overcoming every opposition* in the way, arising from whatever quarter; and resolving, and acting on the principle, that nothing shall stop you, till you completely gain your point. This pressing into the kingdom of God is elsewhere described in such language as the following: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:" "Labour" "for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life:" "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

Be exhorted thus earnestly and scripturally to press into the kingdom of God, from the consideration of the dreadful misery which you will thereby escape—endless exclusion from happiness and from God; and from the consideration of the unspeakable value of the end which you will thereby attain—heaven, endless life and glory. Be exhorted to press in with vigour and without delay, from the consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of the time during which it will be possible for you to obtain admission. If you trifle away your precious time in faintly seeking entrance, till the

door be shut, your knocking and crying will then be in vain: it will be a lost cause with you. Make haste, then, and press in with all your might, while it is called to-day. "Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither you are going." Sacrifice every thing to your soul's eternal good. Give up all for Christ. Whatever persons or things may stand in your way, push them aside without ceremony, and press straight forward. If you press on in this way, you have the promise of success. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." If you come to the Lord in this way, he will in no wise cast you out."

And, if you have already obtained admittance into the kingdom of God on earth, still press on towards the kingdom of God on high. Do not relax in your exertions, but seek even to increase them. Do not spend much time in looking back, or in dwelling on your present progress, but look forward, and go forward, and be like the apostle, when he said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

## LECTURE LXXXVII.

LUKE XVI. 19-31.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. 22. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. 27. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

WHAT a striking, and even terrific passage! Some have been inclined to view it as a real history, not, however, apparently with much reason; for, though several of the first mentioned circumstances might have literally occurred in the history of real persons, it is sufficiently plain that what is stated in the last part of the passage, in the form of a conversation, did not, and probably could not, occur in fact in that manner, but is to be considered as an embodying, in the language of dialogue, of certain ideas which exist in the minds of many of the inhabitants of the other world, and this for the sake of making these ideas more intelligible and impressive to the living. It is possible, indeed, that the passage may be partly historical and partly allegorical, as many think is the case with the book of Job; but the

particularity of that narrative, and many other considerations, demonstrate that what is said of Job himself must be held as a real history, and could not apply to any other individual; whereas, there is nothing of what is said in this passage but what is constantly occurring in substance. There is, therefore, nothing to prevent us from interpreting, or rather, there is everything to require us to interpret, the passage as a parable throughout. It is not, however, exactly like most other parables; for here there is no similitude or comparison. It is like the parable of the good Samaritan. It is an allegorical description. It is a supposed case, drawn out in the form of history, for our instruction,\* and it is indeed full of matter eminently deserving our most serious and prayerful consideration. May the Lord enable us to give it such consideration, and may he bless it abundantly for our souls' good!

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus may be divided into three branches, which we shall consider in order: *First*, The outward condition and implied character of these two persons, during their life on earth; *Secondly*, Their death, and the state into which it introduced them; and, *Thirdly*, The dialogue between the rich man and Abraham.

Let us consider, first, *the outward condition and implied character of the rich man and Lazarus, during their life on earth*. This branch includes the first three verses.

No proper name is given to one of the parties, he is merely designated as "*a certain rich man*." God, in his providence, had bestowed on him great wealth. That circumstance, surely, could not be imputed to him as a crime in itself. The Supreme Disposer of all things places men in very different stations of life, and bestows on them very different degrees of outward prosperity. Wealth is, doubtless, a blessing when it is properly employed, and, though not many, yet some rich men are called.

It is said of this rich man, that he was "*clothed in purple and fine linen*."† It is not agreed of what material the cloth was made which our translators render, both in the Old and New Testament, "*fine linen*;" but, Egypt was particularly famed for producing it, and of it was made what was reckoned the finest cloth in ancient times. The very finest of this species of cloth fetched an enormous price, so that it was only very opulent persons who could afford

\* A parable, similar to this, is found in the Jewish Talmud. Light-foot quotes it from the Gemara.

† *Byssus*. צִבְצִיב See Calmet on the article Byssus.



to wear it. That kind of cloth, as well as other kinds, was, of course, sometimes dyed purple. The colour of purple being splendid, and formerly very expensive, was worn chiefly by princes and great men. In some countries, indeed, it was indicative of high authority.\* In illustration of this mode of dress the following passages may be noticed: "The men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule over us;" and they presented to him, among other gifts, "the purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian."—"Mordecai," whom king Ahasuerus delighted to honour, "went out from the presence of the king, in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple."† This being a rich man, we are not to conclude that his being handsomely dressed was, in itself, necessarily sinful; for, if men dress only according to their station, and not extravagantly, or indecently, they do what is reasonable in itself, and what obviously tends to promote the welfare of others, by providing them with employment and the means of subsistence.

It is farther said of this man, that he "*fared sumptuously*," or, rejoiced splendidly,‡ "*every day*." This expression includes every kind of showy and costly living, more especially a sumptuous table, and that not on some great and rare occasions, but constantly; and, though it seems to be rather too strong to be applicable to any mode of living which is quite lawful, it does not necessarily imply any shameful excess. He is by no means described as that monster of iniquity, in the eye of the world, which some have supposed. Though rich, it is not said that he acquired his wealth by extortion or fraud, or that he was a griping miser. Though he dressed and lived splendidly, it is not said that he was a drunkard, or a glutton, or a debauchee, or an infidel. Nor, though we cannot suppose him to have been truly charitable, does it appear, from any thing said of the beggar, that the rich man absolutely refused to allow any of his substance to go to the relief of the poor. He was not an idolatrous heathen; on the contrary, from his calling Abraham "father," and from its being said that his brethren had Moses and the prophets, it is to be inferred that he was a Jew, and was not altogether destitute of some form of religion. Still, it is plain, from his miserable end, that he was an ungodly sinner.

\* "Purpurei tyranni."—*Horace*. † Judges viii. 26; Esth. viii. 15.

‡ *Εὐφραίνωντος λαμπρως*.

In what, then, did his sin consist? It appears to have consisted chiefly in his setting his heart on earthly things, and seeking his happiness in them, to the neglect of God, of his soul, and of eternity. He was like the rich fool, mentioned in the 12th chapter, who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry:"—"So is every one that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." And are there not many such characters in every age? "Behold," saith the Lord, by Ezekiel, "this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy." Such persons are thus addressed by Amos,\* as leading a life of self-indulgence, to the neglect of their own spiritual concerns, and of the interests of the Church of God: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion"—"Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." To the same purpose, in Job,† "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" There are actually many such; and, what is very worthy of consideration, there would be many more than there are, could all obtain their heart's desire: for, are not those who are rich, and who are in gay clothing, and fare sumptuously every day, generally regarded as the most enviable of men? and is not such a state of wealth and splendour what multitudes would regard as the very summit of their ambition, and what many pursue as their fondest object? But, "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The bent of the soul, rather than the outward accomplishment of purpose, constitutes the character. If this consideration be rightly pondered, as well as that of the rich man in this parable

\* Amos vi. 1, 3.

† Job xxi. 12.

not being represented as remarkably impious, or profligate, the lesson contained in his history will be of much more general application than might at first appear. Many actually live as the man here described; more go, though not so far as he, yet as far in such godless indulgences as their circumstances permit; and still more have their affections set on them, though they cannot get at them. In reading this description, then, it becomes us all to be jealous over ourselves, lest we virtually cherish the same spirit, and thereby expose ourselves to the same condemnation.

This case, however, addresses itself most directly to the rich and prosperous. Undoubtedly, wealth exposes men to many temptations to forget God, to look no farther for happiness than to earthly gratifications, and even to become proud, oppressive, and profligate. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" said our Lord; and, in explanation of that saying, he added, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" What a curse do riches become, and what an occasion for lamentation do they present, when they are the means of ruining the soul! "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire."—"Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter." But all this will become more and more plain and impressive as we proceed.

What a contrast to the outward condition of this rich man is presented in that of him of whom our Lord thus speaks, "*And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores!*" The word Lazarus, may be so derived as to signify either, no help, or, help in God. According to either of these derivations, the name was well chosen, and very descriptive of this man, who had no help but in God. Poverty will prevail, in different degrees, at different times and places; but we are told that "the poor shall never cease out of the land." Such penury may be necessary, partly in the way of punishment, and for the manifestation of the evil consequences of misconduct, in the case of some; and partly in the way of mercy, for the spiritual training of others; and it is obvious that it affords scope for the exercise of benevolence, on the part of those who

are more favourably situated as to outward circumstances. In these varied distributions, the agency of Divine Providence is devoutly to be acknowledged. "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them." As for the man here mentioned, he was in abject poverty, having neither sufficient food to satisfy his hunger, nor sufficient raiment to cover his diseased body. Being unable to work for his bread, he was constrained to beg for it. He was a beggar, not from choice and indolence, we may be sure, but from necessity; for no man of piety would be guilty of preying on the public, who is able to support himself, or would needlessly and voluntarily resort to habits of low and idle vagrancy, which are so annoying to others, and so likely to destroy all good principle and good feeling in himself, and which, therefore, ought, as much as possible, to be discouraged.

In addition to his extreme poverty, Lazarus laboured under severe bodily distress. He was "*full of sores*," which had so enfeebled his body that he could not walk; he was therefore carried from place to place, and laid down where relief might be expected to be afforded to him. We cannot, indeed, by any means, look on this particular way of proceeding with poor, disabled persons, as the best which can be adopted; for it would be far better that they were provided for in some settled home. Nevertheless, the plan of carrying out the infirm poor is natural enough in a very simple state of society, and is better in any case, than that they should be left to pine in want, unseen. Thus, we read, in the Acts of the Apostles, \* that when Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, "a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple." At the rich man's gate, then, lay the poor, diseased Lazarus, "*desiring† to be fed*," anxious to have his hunger satisfied, though it were but

\* Acts iii. 1.

† *Ἐπιθυμῶν*. Elsner thinks this word should be here rendered, "being contented," or, "reckoning it a great matter;" and remarks that the word is used for, "being delighted," in the Septuagint of Isa. lviii. 2; and for, "being contented," by Lysias, Orat. xxiv.

"with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table." This seems to have been a common proverbial expression; for, when Jesus said to the woman of Canaan, who came worshipping him, and imploring his help, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs," she replied, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." The desire of Lazarus was modest, and he would have been contented with little. We are not told whether that little was granted or not. It may have been that he was relieved in that way, for there is nothing said to the contrary; and, though the rich man was graceless and godless, we are not therefore obliged to suppose that he was destitute of the common feelings of humanity. Nor, though we were to suppose, not merely that such scanty relief, but much more abundant supply, was granted, would it follow that he was, properly speaking, a good man, or one who would not have been lost for ever; for we must not be so forgetful of the first principles of Christianity, as to imagine that a pittance given to the poor from his abundance, or even the most splendid donations, can secure deliverance from hell, and admission into heaven, for the man who "neglects the great salvation," and lives and dies in nature's condemnation and unregenerateness.

This poor man was full of sores: "*moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*" Whatever may be in the idea that this process has something of a soothing and healing nature, the circumstance is here stated as an aggravation<sup>\*</sup> of Lazarus' misery. He had none to take proper care of his ulcers. Isaiah's figurative description was, in this case, literally true: "His whole head was sick, his whole heart faint. From the sole of his foot, even unto his head, there was no soundness in him; but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores: they were not closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." It could not have been, on the way to glory as he was, that Lazarus made a studious display of his sores; for it is certain, that those beggars who are the most ostentatious of misery, and the most clamorous in proclaiming their wants, are by no means generally the most afflicted and most indigent. The situation of Lazarus was such that he could not conceal his sores from the public eye, and this at once demonstrated and aggravated his sufferings. Thus, destitute of the necessities of life, of

\* "*Moreover,*" ἀλλὰ καὶ, nay, but also—in addition to the painful circumstances mentioned before.—*Grotius, Beza, Calvin.*

health, and of friends, he dragged out, to human appearance, a wretched life, till death terminated his sorrows.

Such was the outward condition of Lazarus: but what was his character? Though we have not any particular description of this, yet, from his admission into heaven at last, it is necessarily to be inferred that he was a believing and a holy man. He was one who, though poor, in the literal sense, was rich in treasures of grace. Though he could scarcely obtain crumbs of the bread that perisheth, he feasted abundantly on "the bread of life." Though in rags, he was clothed in the garments of salvation. Though his body was sick, and full of sores, his soul was healed and cleansed by the great Physician. Though heavily smitten, he bowed to the stroke, and welcomed all his heavenly Father's will.

On this branch of the parable we may find the general observation, that outward circumstances furnish no criterion of men's spiritual state and character, or of the favour or displeasure of God. "No man knoweth either love, or hatred, by all that is before him." On the one hand, some wicked men, with whom the Lord is angry every day, are very prosperous. "Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth."—"Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world: they increase in riches." This should teach us all not to set too high a value on outward advantages, but to desire chiefly those blessings which are connected with God's favour here, and which are a pledge of his presence hereafter. On the other hand, it often happens that the Lord's people are in very depressed and afflicted circumstances, so that, if in this life only they had hope, they would be of all men the most miserable. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" This should teach those who are in a lowly and afflicted condition to see to it that they have an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ, and be possessed of the consolations of the gospel. If such be their attainments, then they will be "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

The second branch of the parable of the rich man and

Lazarus is, *their death, and the state into which it introduced them.* This branch includes the 22d and 23d verses.

The poor man and the rich man both died. This change is common to all. Some die in prosperity, and some in adversity. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." The high and the low fall under death's stroke. The prince and the beggar meet in death's domain; "the small and the great are there." Saints and sinners die; but the result, to the two classes, is very different. Saints die, that they may escape from sorrow, and be forever with the Lord—sinners, that all their hollow joys may expire, and that they may go "to their own place."

In this case, "*it came to pass that the beggar died.*" In his last moments, he would be refreshed, we must suppose, with divine support, and the most glorious prospects, and death would put an end to all his wants and pains for ever. How sweet, to poor and afflicted believers, the moment when they are taken away from the evil to come, when they enter into peace, and rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness! There is nothing said of Lazarus' funeral. Doubtless, his body was put out of the way by some means. It was, probably, borne to the narrow house by a few persons almost as poor as he had been himself. He died unlamented and unregretted by the public, if they did not even feel pleased that the world was rid of an unpleasant burden. Yet not uncared or unhonoured was he in his departure; for "*he*"—that is, his soul, which was truly himself—"was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." We are told that the angels are "all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." We are also informed, more particularly, that they have charge of the saints on their ways or journeys. The words of the Psalmist\* are applicable, not only to Christ himself, but to each of his followers: "The Lord shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." It is nothing more than these declarations would lead to expect, that the angels would not desert, but attend, with peculiar care, the people of God, in their last, and

\* Ps. xci. 11.

longest, and most important journey—their journey from earth to heaven.\* It is, doubtless, a service most agreeable to these holy and benevolent spirits, to follow up their other ministrations by discharging this kind office; though, indeed, they cannot be considered as having finished their ministrations till the resurrection, when “the Son of man shall send them with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” What happiness and honour for Lazarus, to be thus conducted by angels, through unknown ways, to glory!

“Abraham’s bosom,” was one of the names which the Jews gave to paradise, or heaven; and it is here sanctioned by Jesus Christ. It implies that Abraham, the father of the faithful, is there, occupying a distinguished place. It implies, too, that the saints in heaven know each other, and hold familiar and endearing intercourse. There is, in this expression, also, an allusion to the posture in which the Jews, and other Eastern nations, reclined at meat on couches, so that every person reclined on, or rather, towards, the breast of him who was next to him on his left hand.† In this way, the happiness of heaven is set forth under the comparison of a noble banquet, partaken of in company with Abraham, and, of course, the other glorified patriarchs and departed saints. Thus, in another place, our Lord says,‡ “That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” What a change for poor, despised, diseased Lazarus! He who could not obtain admittance within the rich man’s gate, and who could hardly procure crumbs to satisfy his hunger, enters triumphantly the gate of heaven, is seated next to the father of the faithful, and feeds on all the blessings of the heavenly banquet. Thus it is with every one who dies in the Lord. Let this

\* Plato (in *Phædo*) teaches, that the soul which has passed through life pure and temperate (when it dies) has the gods for its companions and guides, *ζυνεμπόρων και ἡγεμόνων θείων τευχέων*. The Greeks and Romans generally assigned this office to Mercury, who was thence called, the Conductor, *Πομπός*, *Πομπάιος*, *Νεκροπομπός*, *Ψυχοπομπός*, and *Ψυχαγωγός*. Sophocles (*Ajac*. *Flagell.* 843) represents Ajax, when about to die, as invoking Mercury, the Conductor, to lay him sweetly asleep, and to remove him by a gentle and quick leap.

“*Mercuri facunde*, ———

*Tu pias lætis animas reponis  
Sedibus.*—*Hor. Od.*, lib. i. 10.

† See John xiii. 23.

‡ Matt. viii. 11.



thought, then, support the heart of believers in the darkest hour. Let them think, with solemnity, and yet with cheerfulness, of their latter end, of the close of their sorrows, of the angelic convoy, of the glorious entrance into the regions of immortality, and of all the varied and endless blessedness of the saints in light: let them think of these things, and be of good cheer. May such blessedness be ours!

But, "*the rich man also died.*" His wealth could not purchase a reprieve, not to speak of immortality on earth. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem," in this sense, "his brother," or himself, "or give to God a ransom for him," "that he should still live, and not see corruption." How alarming to this sinner, in his approaches, was the last enemy, if he was at all aware of what was coming! "Oh, death, bitter is the remembrance of thee to the man who is at rest in his possessions!" And awful must have been his distraction at the hour of dissolution, if he was sensible and awakened. But was there nothing of a splendid nature to enliven the scene in the eye of the world? There was splendour in his departure, such splendour as it was; for he "*was buried*"—buried, no doubt, in a pompous and expensive way, with showy decorations and processions; and a costly monument, with a flattering inscription, would, probably, be erected on the spot where his remains were deposited. But such honours availed him not; for he was insensible to them all. "I saw the wicked buried," says the Preacher; "this also is vanity." The rich man's career of ungodly indulgence was at an end; and nothing remained of it but the guilt it contracted, and the remorse it entailed. His last hope of happiness vanished for ever when his eyes closed on this world; for, though his body was splendidly buried, his soul was lost.

"*And in hell\* he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.*" If his conscience awoke before death, now his worst apprehensions were more than realized. If there were "no bands in his death," now he was bound "in everlasting chains of darkness;" and what a surprise must it have been, to awake from his dreams of luxury and security, amid the indescribable miseries of the damned! But we shall hear more of this in the last part of the parable.

\* In Hades, or the unseen world; here evidently the place of punishment.

It is added here, that the rich man “*saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*” The nature of a parable renders it uncertain how far this is to be understood literally. It is clear, however, that the condemned in hell must be as certain of the happiness of departed believers, as if they actually saw them in heaven; and the consciousness of this, in connexion with the sense of the loss they have sustained by being excluded from heaven themselves, must greatly aggravate their misery. Yet there may be something of a more direct knowledge of this nature, for we read\* that the workers of iniquity “shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and they themselves thrust out.” How woful the change for this ungodly man! Surely he felt as if he would have said, “Fool that I was, to sacrifice the substance of happiness for the shadow! Wretched man, to reject offered mercy on earth, to cast away all the joys of yonder heaven, and to involve myself in all the misery of this hell! What madness, to revel in thoughtless alienation from God, knowing assuredly that I was thus to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power!”

But more concerning this wretched man afterwards, if it please God. Meanwhile, let us tremble at the thought of the awful abyss into which he was plunged; and let us flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel, and trust and obey Him who alone can deliver us from the wrath to come.

\* Luke xiii. 28.

## LECTURE LXXXVIII.

LUKE XVI. 19-31.

## PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS—CONTINUED.

WE formerly observed, that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus may be divided into three great branches, and two of these we then considered, namely, the outward condition and implied character of these two persons during their life on earth, and their death, and the state into which death introduced them. We now proceed to consider the *Third branch*, which is, *The dialogue between the rich man and Abraham*. This includes what is contained from the 24th verse to the end of the chapter.

It was noticed, generally, that the nature of a parable renders it unnecessary to suppose that all the circumstances introduced ever literally take place, and, more particularly, that what is stated in the last part of this parable, in the form of a conversation, did not, and probably, could not, occur in fact, in that manner, but is to be considered as an embodying, in the language of dialogue, of certain ideas which exist in the minds of many of the inhabitants of the other world, in order to render these ideas more intelligible and impressive to the living. The rich man, having died and passed into hell, is represented as there seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus reclining close beside him. The description then proceeds, in the same allegorical manner: "*And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me; and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*" The invisible world being thus opened up, our Lord, instead of inculcating the doctrines relating to it in an abstract manner, puts them into the mouth of two of its inhabitants.

And, first of all, how dreadful the view here given of the misery of the condemned in the other world! "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," said our Lord; and

here, "I am tormented in this flame," says the wretched man himself.

Let us reflect on the absolute *certainty* of the punishment of those who die in sin. Conscience forebodes it: there is "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries" of God. Revelation declares it. The Psalmist says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Our Saviour says, "Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell:" and his apostle declares, that God "will render to every man according to his works," "to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." There will be no possibility of escaping. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished."

Let us reflect, also, on the *dreadful nature* of this punishment. It is a heavy punishment of loss. They lose all earthly comforts, all the means of grace, all the strivings of the Spirit, all restraints from sin; and they lose the society of saints and angels, all the happy employments of the heavenly state, and the blissful vision of God and of the Lamb. There is also the punishment of sense, or positive punishment. On this subject, the most awful language is employed in Scripture, the full import of which we cannot fathom. They must pine under the lashes of a guilty conscience, and the torments of despair; but a wounded spirit who can bear? Here, conscience is often lulled asleep by the delusions, or drowned in the giddy stream, of life; but there, nothing can ever intervene to keep it from preying on itself. The soul agonizes mentally on its entrance into the prison; and the body, on its resurrection, will be subjected to bodily infliction. What words are these: "They are cast into outer darkness; *there* shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"—"Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!" They are subjected to dreadful and distressing society—the society of the abandoned of men, and of the devil and his angels. They are subjected to the pressure of the Divine wrath. This is terrible even on earth; when God hides his face, men are troubled, when his terrors set themselves in array against them, they are distracted, even now: but how terrible will his wrath be in hell! "Who knoweth the power of his anger? according to his fear so

is his wrath." The dreadful nature of their punishment may be inferred from what Christ underwent, when sin was imputed to him. When such things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? When the wrath of God was so terrible to the spotless Lamb, what shall it be to his obstinately impenitent enemies! Add to these considerations that the state of suffering shall be without intermission, and without alleviation. It shall be without intermission. An interval of ease from paroxysms of pain is very refreshing; but no such interval is known there, for, as it is expressed, they are "tormented day and night," and "have no rest day nor night." It shall be without alleviation. In the bitterest earthly cup there is some sweetening ingredient; in the heaviest earthly sorrow there is some soothing cordial; but *there* there is not "a drop of water to cool the tongue."

Under the pressure of such suffering, this wretched man cried aloud to the patriarch for help, styling him, "Father Abraham." Even on earth, it was vain for those Jews to plead, as they were commonly ready to plead, their connexion with Abraham, who were not possessed of his faith, and not walking in his footsteps. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father," said our Lord; "for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And so, the plea is at least equally vain in hell. Let us not flatter ourselves, my friends, that our relation to pious persons, our Christian descent and baptism, or any outward privileges, will avail to our salvation at last, if we personally neglect salvation now. In that case, such advantages will plainly aggravate our guilt and condemnation.

It is but a small favour, you observe, that the man asks. He does not ask to be delivered altogether from hell, or to be admitted into heaven, or to have any great relief for a considerable time; nor does he ask Abraham to come to him himself: he only begs that he would "send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool his tongue;" and yet this very small request cannot be granted. It has been observed, that this is the only passage in Scripture that looks like a prayer to a departed saint; and yet, it is but an application to one who is supposed to be within sight and hearing, and that, too, for a small favour, which, small as it was, was refused: so little encouragement is there here to the idolatrous practice of praying to the dead, too prevalent with many.

The reply of Abraham to this request is given in part in the 25th verse: "*But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*" He addresses him civilly—a rule which always ought to be attended to, however abandoned and hopeless the person addressed may be. Even "Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil (he disputed about the body of Moses), durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Abraham acknowledged this lost Jew as his son, his son "according to the flesh," though, spiritually, he was of his father the devil. But, while he spoke to him civilly, he spoke to him honestly and truly, and did not extenuate his guilt and folly, or excite hopes which could never be realized. He reminded him that he had already received his "good things," those things which he had chiefly desired, namely, riches and luxurious enjoyment; and, therefore, that he had no reason to be dissatisfied, seeing that he had got his favourite wish, and that he could not now expect those spiritual and heavenly enjoyments, which he had never sought while there was a possibility of obtaining them, but must acknowledge, that the misery in which he was involved was the just and unavoidable consequence of the choice he had made. On the other hand, he reminds him that Lazarus, who had chosen rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, was only reaping the natural and promised fruit of such a choice. Let us here reflect how the remembrance of the part we have chosen in time will be to us the occasion of joy, or of misery, in the other world; and let us see that we make choice of those spiritual blessings which are connected with our everlasting good, knowing that what we sow, that we shall also reap. If we sow unto the flesh, we shall, of the flesh, reap corruption; but, if we sow unto the Spirit, we shall, of the Spirit, reap life everlasting.

But, even though Abraham had thought it right, and had been desirous, to relieve the wretched man, it would have been entirely out of his power. "*And beside all this,*" added he, "*between us and you there is a great gulf,\* or chasm,\* fixed: so that they who would pass from hence*

\* Profane writers also speak of a "great gulf," *χάσμα μέγα*, in the unseen world. There is a very striking passage of this kind in Hesiod's Theogonia, *lines* 729-745. The same idea also occurs in Plato, Plutarch, Ovid, and Lucian.

to you" (if any such there could be) "*cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence,*" however gladly, doubtless, many would do so, if they could. Now, this is just the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment; and this eternity is its most dreadful feature. Sin, as committed against God, who is an infinite being, is an infinite evil, and deserves an infinite punishment. And sin, as committed by man, is committed by an immortal being, and deserves a punishment commensurate with his nature, that is, an endless punishment, though it will be different in degree, according to the degree of guilt. Besides, the means of obtaining pardon and holiness are not within the reach of those who are in hell; and, instead of having sin cleared off, they are still sinning more and more. Indeed, if we will but credit the plain declarations of Scripture, we cannot entertain the slightest doubt on the subject. Damnation is declared to last as long as salvation: and there is no more reason to look for the end of the one than for that of the other. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Many would fain get rid of this doctrine; but they cannot, while revelation is entitled to credit. Many would fill up the gulf, or build a bridge over it; but nothing of the kind can be done: it is absolutely impassable. What a thought is this! In any pain, the prospect of relief, at however distant a period, is very reviving. Were the impenitent condemned to suffer as many ages as there are drops of water in the ocean, or piles of grass on the earth, still, if there were a certainty, or a probability, or even a possibility, of their deliverance at last, they would not be, at any moment, utterly wretched: but, there is no prospect of the kind for them; there is no end to damnation; they cannot even hope for an end, for they are not infidels there. They look forward to an eternity of woe. No ray of hope darts across the gloom of hell's cavern. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

It must always be distressing, in itself, to speak or hear of such things; but what is painful may be salutary. Why are they revealed by an infinitely wise and gracious God if we are to pass them by? It is quite impossible, consistently with faithfulness, to banish from our system this doctrine, or from our vocabulary these words of inspiration. Let us be ready to give them their own place; for, however appalling to some, they are absolutely necessary to others, and

should be instructive to all. How very dreadful, then, this representation of the sufferings of the condemned, as being without intermission, without alleviation, and without end! It is thus that, in supposed vision, but in accordance with scriptural representations, the poet\* describes the hell in which this rich man, when he was dead, lifted up his eyes, and into which every impenitent sinner is every moment in danger of sinking down:

———"Wide was the place,  
And deep as wide, and ruinous as deep.  
Beneath I saw a lake of burning fire,  
With tempest toss'd perpetually, and still  
The waves of fiery darkness 'gainst the rocks  
Of dark damnation broke."——

———"And far as sight could pierce,  
Or down descend in caves of hopeless depth,  
Through all that dungeon of unfading fire,  
I saw most miserable beings walk,  
'Dying perpetually, yet never dead.'  
Some wandered lonely in the desert flames,  
And some in fell encounter fiercely met,  
With curses loud, and blasphemies, that made  
The cheek of darkness pale.——  
And there were groans that ended not, and sigh-  
That always sighed, and tears that ever wept,  
And ever fell—but not in mercy's sight."

Surely, this part of the parable speaks to sluggish man, as with a voice of thunder, and may well cause the stoutest heart to quake. Let sinners in Zion be afraid—let fearfulness seize the hypocrites. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"† How should we all tremble at the thought!—how should we all fly from the danger!—how should we all keep at the greatest possible distance from the awful pit!—how should we all welcome and improve the Lord's gracious proclamation in the gospel, "Deliver men from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom!" The idea of the unfathomable chasm which separates between the two regions of the invisible world, is very awakening: but let us also remember that a separation, very similar, exists in the present world; for whether we always perceive it or not, there is a line of radical distinction which separates the living into two classes—believing and unbelieving, converted and unconverted men: and, according as they are found on the one side of that line, or on the other, at death, so they shall dwell on the one side, or on the other side of the great gulf, through eternity. There is one difference,

\* Pollok.

† Isa. xxxiii. 14.



however—and, blessed be God for it!—while the converted on earth are already safe for ever, the unconverted on earth may pass to the safe side of the line; the gulf of nature's condemnation and depravity is not impassable, while they are here, for, by the grace of God, and in the way of repentance towards God and "faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ," sinners may pass from death to life, and be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Let us consider well on which side of the line we at present have our station; and let none of us contentedly tarry a moment on the wrong side, lest death surprise us there, and fix us there for ever.

Having failed in his application for himself, the rich man (such at least he once was), applies in behalf of his relations on earth. "*Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*" From Lazarus being happy in heaven, and the rich man miserable in hell, while the rich man's father and brethren were yet alive on earth, it is clear that the soul is not in a state of insensibility between death and the resurrection, but continues in a state of consciousness and feeling, and passes into heaven or hell, immediately on its separation from the body. And how impressive and influential should be the consideration of the nearness to which this brings the awful realities of eternity! It is to be inferred, too, from this request, in which no mention is made of widow or children, but only of father and brethren, that this wretched man had died unmarried, and in the prime of life, and that the surviving members of the family were proceeding in an irreligious and worldly course, similar to that which had brought him to the regions of despair. We cannot suppose that any true benevolence has place in the breasts of the condemned dead; it is even probable that natural affection itself is extinct, or at least, if it have any existence, it must be only the source of pain. We must, therefore, suppose that this request arose from a species of selfishness, that is, from a fear that the rest of the family, whom he had doubtless injured by his irreligious conversation and example, should come to everlasting ruin also, and his own misery be thereby aggravated. Men are chargeable, be it observed, with all the consequences which may, at any time, result from their conduct, as he who is guilty of wilful fire-raising is accountable

for all the damage which may be done by the spreading of the fire, though it may extend much farther than he had originally contemplated. How gladly would lost infidel, licentious, and heretical writers and speakers, now recall what they had written and spoken, that no more evil might be done by it, and no more accessions be thereby made to their own punishment! But it cannot be.

Though there was no passage, in either direction, between heaven and hell, this lost man knew that there was a passage from earth to heaven, and he therefore thought that a communication might now be opened up from heaven to earth, for the purpose he specified. He wished Lazarus to be sent, as a special messenger, to warn his relations of their danger. But neither could this be granted. "*Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.*" From this saying, it is clear, that, though many of the Old Testament sanctions were of a temporal nature, those which related to a future state were also brought forward, and *that* with sufficient distinctness to render every person inexcusable who disregarded them. The Jews had also the gospel given them in types and ceremonies, in a way sufficient for their salvation. Let them hear Moses and the prophets, said Abraham, let them observe and follow them, and nothing more is necessary, with God's blessing, to convert and save them.

The lost criminal could not deny that they ought to improve the means they already enjoyed, and that these mean sought to have been effectual; but he knew that they were neglecting them, and he fancied that if something more were done for them, they would be induced to bethink themselves, and turn. "*And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*" On this, Abraham "*said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*" He declared, in short, that, though the request were granted, the mission would be in vain. For his relations, then, as well as for himself, this wretched man's request was justly and necessarily denied, and he was left without remedy, and without hope. Are you ever to do any thing for the spiritual and eternal welfare of those who are nearest and dearest to you?—it must be done now. It will be too late to think of any thing of the kind when you are removed from them by death. Discharge your conscience on this point, while it is possible,

lest your neglect occasion you bitter and unavailing regret for ever.

The words which, in the close of the parable, are thus put into the mouth of Abraham by our Lord, must be considered as Christ's own testimony, and, as such, demand the serious consideration of all his professing followers in every age. Applicable as the words were to the Jews at the time the parable was spoken, they are, in substance, still more emphatically applicable to us, who now enjoy much greater advantages. Considered, then, as applicable to ourselves, they teach us—

First, *That the ordinary means of salvation, which we enjoy, are excellent and abundantly sufficient.* Not to speak of those who lived in Old Testament times, or of those who now live in less favoured parts of the world, our privileges are, surely, peculiarly great. In addition to Moses and the prophets, we have Christ and the apostles. The evidences of revelation are multiplying, and increasing in strength, as time flows on. The discovery of the way of salvation and of the rule of duty is complete. "Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel." Our Sabbaths are secured to us, our sanctuaries are open to us, the Holy Scriptures are in our hands, a stated ministry labours in the midst of us—in a word, we have all religious privileges in abundance. When we look into the Word of God itself, what views there are of sin to alarm us, and of love to draw us! And then, to give effect to the outward means, so that we may be actually enlightened and converted, the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit are purchased, and promised, and ready to be bestowed in answer to prayer. On all these accounts, the Lord may be considered as saying, with regard to us, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" If we are not saved, it must be from inexcusable carelessness and obstinacy in ourselves, and not from any insufficiency in the means.

Secondly, we are here taught, *That if the ordinary means of grace fail to convert us, no extraordinary, that is, no miraculous, means are to be expected.* Miracles were, indeed, necessary to prove the divine origin of revelation at first; but, that being once fully established, they are no longer necessary. Nay, the continuance of them would be a waste of power; and the constant repetition of them, instead of increasing, would diminish, their effect, as familiarity with them would have a tendency to cause them to be looked on

as no miracles at all. Revelation is now complete; and as it is impossible that the chief purpose for which miracles were wrought, namely, to prove revelation, could now be served by them, they are not to be expected. In this, we do not limit God; but he himself has given sufficient reason to believe that, in this department, he is to limit himself. In fact, the only mention, in Scripture, of miracles, or rather of pretensions to miracles, in these last ages, is in connexion with apostasy and error.\* But, though it were consistent with divine wisdom to break through the uniformity of nature, and unhinge the world by continual miracles, surely, those who obstinately and wickedly resist the evidence and the exhortations of God's Word, have, of all men, the least cause to expect miracles to be wrought for them. In the language of Bildad,† "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of its place?"

But we are here taught, Thirdly, *That when the ordinary means fail to convert men, miracles, though they were wrought, would fail also.* How contrary to the concluding words of this parable is the idea, unhappily taken up by some, that more is necessary for the conversion of the world than the reading and preaching of the Word, accompanied by the ordinary influences of divine grace! "See you not," say they, "that your labouring, in the old way, to convert the world, is very much in vain? You will never diffuse Christianity over the world, or bring the Church to a lively state, on that plan. Instead of improving, the world is getting worse and worse. Something else is necessary. In short, the gift of miracles must be revived, and that greatest of miracles must take place, the personal, literal, and visible return of Christ to reign on earth. Thus, and thus alone, shall the whole world be converted." Now, nothing can be more erroneous than that idea. The gospel has already overcome, without the aid of miracles, as great difficulties as it ever can have to contend with again: the success of the ordinary means is very considerable, and no other means are necessary. What is needed is, not more miracles, but more faith in the miracles already performed—not new means, but the more zealous employment of the usual means—not influences extraordinary in kind, but the ordinary influences in an extraordinary degree, that is, a more plentiful outpouring of the enlightening, converting,

\* Rev. xiii. 13, 14.

† Job xviii. 4.

and sanctifying influences of divine grace. Ecclesiastical history shows, both that such pretensions to miracles have been put forth in different ages of the Church, and that time has always exposed their wickedness, or their weakness. Besides, it is altogether a mistake to suppose that miracles, were they really wrought, would, even instrumentally, convert those who resist the present means of salvation. The inefficacy of miracles, in this way, with persons of such a disposition, is seen in the history of Pharaoh, of the Israelites in the wilderness, and of the great majority of those who witnessed the miracles of Jesus Christ and his apostles. The very miracle here requested, namely, the return of one from the dead, was granted in the case of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary; but though it was useful to some sincere inquirers, wrought, as it was, as part of the proof of the truth of the gospel, the chief priests consulted how they might put Lazarus to death, to prevent the effect which seeing him alive might have on those who were open to conviction. Our Lord's own resurrection was a still more important and more striking miracle of the same kind; and yet, though it was a necessary step in the evidences of Christianity, and proved of the utmost use to those who were not beset with prejudice, the Jews, as a body, continued to reject the gospel, and to oppose and persecute its adherents, the same as before. Our Lord would not work miracles to gratify those who complained, in the midst of evidence, of the want of evidence; nor, though he had done so, is there any reason to suppose that such persons would have been satisfied. As for the return of a man from the dead, it might now surprise and frighten those who knew him before; but it would be of no general, permanent, spiritual benefit: and if such an event were to occur as often as sceptical men might desire, it would be very frequent, and, of course, would hardly make any impression whatever. The special influences of the Holy Ghost, operating by means of the gospel, can alone convert sinners, and edify believers. Let us, then, learn wisdom from this declaration of the mind of Christ. Let us not, for ourselves, or for others, seek after extraordinary means of impression, such as, apparitions, visions, dreams, sudden impulses, tongues, or any kind of miracles; but let us be contented with the ordinary means, and make diligent use of them, looking up to God, in prayer, for the gracious influences of his Spirit to render them effectual.

Such is this most remarkable and most impressive parable: see that you all apply it to yourselves. Whether you be rich or poor, healthy or sick, you are all hastening to the grave. Yet a little while, and all will be at an end with you, as to this world. We cannot judge what will become of you then: it is not ours to fix on individuals for the one region of the invisible world, or for the other; but there is here a lively representation of both regions, in the one or the other of which you will soon be all found. Jesus draws aside the veil, for a little, and shows you, in two particular instances, a specimen of the whole. Behold the one—pious Lazarus happy in paradise: behold the other—the wicked, rich man tormented in hell. So, in a short time, you shall be, like the one, rejoicing in glory; or, like the other, agonizing in despair. Do you indeed believe this? If you do, then what care, what anxiety, what diligence, what prayer, can at all equal the importance of this concern? Well; you have Moses and the prophets—hear them: you have Christ and the apostles—hear them: you have, at this moment, the gospel offer of salvation—receive it. Turn, and live. “Repent, and believe the gospel.” Be indifferent no longer, lest you die, and sink into the abyss, in your sins. If you neglect your salvation now, it will be too late for you to think of it then: it will be too late when the great gulf is interposed between you and heaven. As for you on whom the standing means of grace have already taken saving effect, prize them more and more, and use them with still greater diligence. You are already safe; but the greater the effect which the means of grace produce on you here, the brighter will be the crown of glory which will be placed on your head hereafter.

## LECTURE LXXXIX.

LUKE XVII. 1-10.

"Then saith he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! 2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. 5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. 7. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8. And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink? 9. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

OF the four topics introduced into this passage, the first is that of "*offences*," that is, *scandals*, or, more literally still, *stumbling-blocks*.\* In Leviticus† we find this precept: "Thou shalt not put a stumbling-block before the blind." Scripture and common humanity require not to place any thing in the way of a blind man, over which he might literally stumble and fall. So, figuratively, stumbling-blocks, scandals, or, as here, offences, are all those ways of speaking and acting which have a tendency to prejudice men against true religion, so as to lead them to be disgusted with it, and to renounce it, and thus, as we say, to stumble, and fall into sin and spiritual ruin.

Some "*offences*," or causes of stumbling to ourselves, are found in our own sinful inclinations; against being thrown down by these we are thus warned, by our Lord, who calls on us to put them away from us, though they may be dear to us as a hand, or a foot, or an eye: "Wherefore, if thy hand, or thy foot, offend thee," or, cause thee to stumble, or

\* Σκανδαλα.

† Lev. xix. 14.

fall into sin, "cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life, halt, or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire." So teaches our Lord, in the 18th chapter of Matthew, which appears to correspond with this passage in Luke. Instructions much the same, in substance, were formerly given by Christ, in his sermon on the mount. It is sufficiently plain, however, that it is not to offences, or causes of stumbling, arising to ourselves from our own evil inclinations, that this passage in Luke refers, but to those which are cast in our way by others.

Of these "offences," many are presented by the avowed opposers of the gospel. Sometimes they assume the form of persecution; and this causes many unstable professors to stumble and fall. It is said of the stony-ground hearer, who has no root in himself, that "when tribulation, or persecution, ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended," he is so stumbled and hurt, as to fall away. At other times, "offences" assume the form of sophistry, or false reasoning, which is frequently fatal to the unwary. This is especially dangerous, when it is united with a specious profession, and with declarations of esteem and good-will, and "cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly;" aiming at their own gain, or gratification, or fame, as heads of parties; "and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."\* Akin to the offensive procedure of such persons is that of those who invent, or propagate, heretical and extravagant opinions. Of such, the apostle Peter † speaks, when he says, "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable," or destructive, "heresies."—"And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of:" as if the errors of those who are corrupted were to be charged against those who are sound; and as if genuine Christianity were to be held responsible for what is altogether opposed to itself. When "the way

\* Rom. xvi. 17.

— — — † 2 Pet. ii. 1.



of truth," the cause of true, evangelical religion, is beginning to prosper, and to gain, in a good degree, the favourable ear of the public, it is one of the masterpieces of Satan's device to stir up some high professors to broach heresies, and to be guilty of fanatical extravagances; for nothing is more calculated to throw an air of suspicion and ridicule over the face of the whole religious world, in the eye of those who have not the patience, or candour, to discriminate—nothing more likely to stumble inquirers, and to frighten them away from the study of the truth altogether. It ought not, indeed, to be so, but such is human nature, that so it is. It is our duty, therefore, to watch and pray that the Church may be free from such offences: and when they do unhappily arise, it is our duty decidedly to protest against them, and to put them down by salutary discipline, that we be not identified with those who are guilty of them, and be not accessory to the mischief which they occasion.

But our Lord seems here to have a still more special reference to those offences, or stumbling-blocks, which consist in immoral and inconsistent conduct on the part of those who have a profession of religion. Such offences, alas! often occur; and the injury they do to the cause of religion is incalculable. It is their plain tendency, and, in many cases, it is their actual effect, to strengthen the prejudices of ungodly, worldly, and thoughtless men against religion altogether, and to do away the favourable opinion which inquirers are beginning to entertain, both of piety itself and of those who are usually considered pious. When the sin of Eli's sons was very great before the Lord, the consequence was, that "men abhorred the offering of the Lord:"\* and God thus reproves the wicked priests, by Malachi: "Ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law." Such scandalous conduct is had in every man; it is very bad in those who wish to retain any character for religion; it is worse still in those who are high in religious character and profession; and it is worst of all in the ministers of religion.

"*It is impossible,*" says our Lord, "*but that offences will come.*" Considering the depravity of the human heart, and the temptations of the world and the devil, it cannot be but that such scandals will sometimes arise. Open enemies will oppose, and supposed friends of the truth will act inconsistently. In the language of the apostle to the Co-

\* 1 Sam. ii. 17; Mal. ii. 8.

rinthians, "There must be also heresies" (and it may be added, misconduct) among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you."—"But woe unto him through whom the offence cometh." The guilt of throwing any such stumbling-block in men's way is very great; for what is any other injury to that which this is calculated to effect? What is a bruised body to a wounded conscience? what is a fall, which may break a bone, or even occasion temporal death, to a fall which precipitates into everlasting ruin? Therefore, as the crime is great, the punishment must be expected to be heavy.

"It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." The ancients sometimes inflicted capital punishment on criminals, especially parricides and sacrilegious persons, by drowning, in which they either tied a heavy stone to their neck, or rolled their body in a sheet of lead. Suetonius\* relates of certain persons, that Augustus, because they conducted themselves proudly and covetously in the province, "cast them into the river, with their necks loaded with a heavy weight." Our Lord declares, that it would be better for a man to be put to death by drowning, or in any other frightful way, than to incur the guilt and punishment of such offences. How little do many consider the heinous nature and tremendous consequences of all sin, and especially of wilfully acting so as to impede the gospel, and ruin, or greatly injure, immortal souls! Our Lord calls his disciples "little ones," an appellation at once characteristic and endearing, as it suggests the idea of their lowliness, and is a kind diminutive. "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," saith Jehovah, by Zechariah; "and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." This description may also have a particular reference to those disciples who are peculiarly

\* Oct. Aug. c. 67. Aristophanes in *Equites*, 1359.

Ἄραν μιστωρον εἰς το βαρεθρον μεβαλῶ,  
Ἐκ του λαρυγγος ἱκπερμασας ὑπερβολον.

Diodorus Siculus, book xvi., says, "Philip hanged Onomarchus," τους δε ἄλλους ὡς ἱεροσυλους πατιποντισι. Halhed, in his Code of Gentoo Laws, inserts the following, "If a woman cause any person to take poison, set fire to any person's house, or murder a man, then the magistrate, having bound a stone to her neck, shall drown her." "A millstone;" in Luke, μυλος ὄνικος, a large millstone, such a millstone as could not be turned with the hand, but required an ass, or other working animal, to move it. In Mark ix. 42, λιθος μυλικος.

weak and liable to be hurt, and for whom the greatest tenderness should be felt, and the utmost care should be taken to avoid whatever might, by any possibility, distress and stumble them. Thus Paul writes to the Corinthians,\* "Take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak," and "through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died."—"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

There are two practical lessons read to us here: the one is, that we should beware of occasioning such offences to others; and the others is, that we should not be stumbled by them, when they are presented to ourselves.

*We should beware of occasioning such offences, or scandals—of throwing such stumbling-blocks in the way of others.* Voluntarily and intentionally to endeavour, by any way of speaking or acting, to lead others to dislike the gospel, and to ruin themselves for ever, or, at least, to sin against God and wound their consciences, would be a crime of the deepest dye, from which we ought to recoil with abhorrence. But we ought to remember, that there is a way of perpetrating the same mischief, without having it so directly in view, and that is by unchristian conduct. Do we profess to be attached to the gospel?—then all eyes will be on us, and much will depend on our consistence. Woe unto us if we prove openly and scandalously unfaithful! Better would it be for us to suffer any temporal calamity, or any violent death. Let us beware, too, of all such inconsistencies, imprudences, and unbecoming ways, as tend to injure the cause of Christ, to furnish the openly ungodly with a handle against all religious profession, to prejudice the less decidedly irreligious against vital religion, and to stumble, offend, grieve, and, perhaps, materially injure true Christians. According to Paul's exhortations,† "Let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." Let us "give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God." Let us "cut off occasion from them that desire occasion" against the truth, and against ourselves; and let us study to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;" that, instead of being offended and stumbled, others may be won to Christ.

The other lesson is, that *we ought not to be stumbled by*

\* 1 Cor. viii.

† Rom. xiv. 13; 1 Cor. x. 32.

*such offences ourselves.* Let us not stumble at Christ himself, or any of his doctrines or precepts. Though to some Christ crucified is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," a "stumbling-block and foolishness," let him be precious to us, as he is to all who believe. Let not the opposition of others deter us from following Christ. Let not the errors of others lead us astray. Let not the inconsistent, or even very scandalous, conduct of some professors prejudice us against real godliness, or be considered as furnishing any excuse for irreligion on our part. We do not judge so foolishly in other cases. We do not, because there is some counterfeit, reject all the real coin. We do not, because we have been sometimes deceived in business, look on all men as knaves. We do not, because there have been many erroneous speculations under the name of philosophy, suppose that there is no true philosophy. Neither let us be so unreasonable as to think, or speak, or act, as if we thought, that because there have been errors held, and sins committed, by many who were called Christians, there is no true Christianity, and no true piety, or that *we* can be safe without the knowledge, belief, and obedience of the truth. In a word, let us resolve to think and act for ourselves according to the Word of God. And yet, let us not trust in ourselves for stability, but in the living God. "Though all men should be offended," said Peter, "yet will I never be offended:" but we all know the result. Let us, therefore, pray the Lord to "hold us up, that we may be safe;" and let us ever remember the Saviour's own words: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

The second topic in this passage is that relating to *for giveness of injuries*. The connection between the former topic and this may consist in the fact, that much scandal is brought on the gospel by an unjust, quarrelsome, and unforgiving spirit in those who profess it.

Our Lord makes the supposition, "*If thy brother trespass against thee;*" if he injure thee, in any way, in thy property, or reputation, or put any slight, or affront, on thee: and such trespasses are of frequent occurrence. In such cases, the first part of the direction given to the persons trespassed against is, "*Take heed to yourselves.*" It is then of much importance to take heed, to be cautious and watchful. We ought to be careful not to lose the command of our temper, nor to break out into a passion, nor to use violent language, nor to take summary satisfaction, nor to vow revenge after-

wards. According to Solomon's precept, "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man according to his work." All angry feelings, words, actions, and resolutions, should then be restrained. If anger do arise, instead of cherishing it, we should lay it aside as soon as possible, and remember the rule, "Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath." "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

In such circumstances, however, a man is not bound to keep the sense of the injury done to him pent up in his own breast; on the contrary, in many cases at least, he is required, and it is very likely to prove useful, to represent the matter calmly to the offending party, to state the unreasonableness and injustice of his conduct, and to "*rebuke him*," or chide him, in a serious and friendly way, in order to convince him of the wrong he has done. The general precept, in Leviticus, includes this particular case: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." No doubt, much good temper is then necessary on both sides; on the one side, to complain and expostulate without exaggerating or upbraiding, and on the other, meekly to receive and to yield to the representation. All this not only is possible, but sometimes occurs, and that with the happiest results. When an opportunity is afforded for mutual explanation, it is often found that intentions had been misunderstood, and that the offence, at the worst, was not nearly so bad as was supposed; and, even when a real and heavy injury has been done, the offender is sometimes convinced, and brought to express his regret, and then the injured party is satisfied. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee."—"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools." Our Lord gives more full instructions on this point in the following passage of Matthew:\* "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

\* Matt. xviii. 15.

"*If he repent,*" says Christ, according to Luke, "*forgive him*"—forgive him instantly, frankly, completely. If, indeed, the offender do not repent—if he do not feel and acknowledge his fault, the person whom he has injured cannot, in the nature of things, feel and act towards him exactly as if he had repented. It is not possible that he can have the same esteem for him, or be on the same terms of free, familiar, and friendly intercourse with him. But, then, he must not cherish any hatred of him; nor must he meditate revenge. The Christian is required to love all men; but the exact nature of the obligation under which he lies cannot be perceived without being aware of the distinction between the love of benevolence and the love of complacency. He is to love all men, even his enemies, and the worst of men, with a love of benevolence, so as to wish them well, and to be ready to do them all the good in his power. But, as to a love of complacency—a love of approbation, esteem, and delight, that he can entertain towards men only in so far as their character appears to him to deserve it.

Lest any should imagine that the repetition of an injury might place an offender beyond the pale of forgiveness, Jesus adds, "*And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*" You will be aware that seven is one of the remarkable numbers, and is often used as a definite for an indefinite number. Thus, "There are seven abominations in his heart," that is, many abominations: "Silver purified seven times," that is, often, or very much, refined. That the use of the number seven here is not intended to limit the exercise of forgiveness, but the very reverse, is clear from the similar passage in Matthew, 18th chapter, 21st verse: "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven."

Let us here, my friends, charge our consciences with the duty of conducting ourselves in a Christian manner towards those who may, in any way, injure us. Let us try to convince them of their offence, and to gain them. If they repent, let us thoroughly forgive them, so as to esteem them as much, and to be as cordial with them, as ever: and, if they do not repent, let us forgive them, so as to seek no revenge, but, on the contrary, to wish them well. There

are various cogent motives to induce us to comply with this duty of forgiveness.—Let us comply with this duty *from a regard to our own peace of mind*. If we give way to a revengeful and uncharitable temper, we punish ourselves by yielding up our hearts a prey to disquietude; whereas, if we forgive, we thereby alone, in a great degree, get rid of the unpleasant mental effect of the injury, and preserve, or recover, our inward tranquillity. Let us comply with this duty *from a regard to the happiness of the world at large*: for, while a revengeful spirit, followed out, fills society with crime and misery, the universal prevalence of a forgiving spirit would lead men to live and love like brothers, in happiness and peace. Let us comply with this duty *from a regard to the express injunctions of Scripture*. These are the words of our Saviour: “I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” And these are the precepts of his inspired apostle: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Let us comply, too, with this duty *from a regard to our own need, and, it may be, our own possession, of divine forgiveness*. We are accustomed to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors:” how then, on the principles of our own prayer, can we expect forgiveness of God ourselves, if we are revengeful? Christ, indeed, positively declares that God will not forgive us, unless we forgive others. This motive ought, surely, to bear with peculiar force on those who are themselves enjoying the peace of divine forgiveness. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Whether the difficulty of these duties suggested to the disciples the necessity of strong faith for their discharge, or

whether they were influenced by a general sense of its importance, the next, or third topic, introduced, is that of *their application to Christ for more faith, together with the reply which it called forth.* “*And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.*”\* They were believers, they had some faith already; but their faith was weak, in comparison with what it should have been. Our Lord said to Peter, on one occasion, “O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?”—and to the twelve disciples, on another occasion, “Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith!” They, very wisely, therefore, desired their faith to be strengthened. It is worthy of remark, that this application is one of the many express prayers addressed to Christ for what nothing short of divine power can grant, and, therefore, a positive proof of his Godhead. The production and increase of faith require a divine energy to be exerted on the mind. In the words of Paul to the Ephesians, “By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

“*And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree*”† (taking an illustration from an object which was before his eyes at the time), “*Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.*” The important efficacy which this declaration proved to belong to faith, showed the propriety of the request just made. The mustard seed, being a very small seed, is here, as in the parable which derives its name from the circumstance, referred to proverbially, to denote a very small degree: and the declaration applies expressly to the faith of miracles, and, in principle, to saving faith. It applies expressly to the faith of miracles, where the gift of working miracles was bestowed. When the disciples could not cure the lunatic, they said to Jesus, “Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” And, as on the occasion of the withering of the fig tree, “If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the

\* *Προσθετε ἡμῖν πίστιν*, “add faith to us.”

† Said to be the same as the sycamore; see chapter xix. 4.



sea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.\*

But this declaration applies also, in principle, to saving faith. The least degree of this grace brings certain salvation in all its parts; and the actual exercise of it renders all spiritual achievements practicable. Believers can do all things through Christ strengthening them. We have now no ground for the exercise of the faith of miracles, because the gift is not bestowed, and because there is no promise that it will be bestowed: indeed, to pretend to any such exercise would be presumption, and not faith; but as applicable to justifying and saving faith, this declaration is still full of instruction to us. We are reminded of the absolute necessity of *some true faith*, in order to safety and holiness. Let us, therefore, examine ourselves whether we be in the faith at all. We are here further reminded that faith is *a progressive nature*. This is implied in the petition. In writing to the Thessalonians,† Paul says, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly.” This consideration is too much overlooked by some, and the consequent evil is considerable. The due consideration of this doctrine is important to our knowing how to think of, speak of, and treat others. It will prevent uncharitable judging of others, because they are not so far advanced as is desirable. “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.”‡ This truth is also important in reference to ourselves. Its consideration will prevent despondency in those pious persons who have some faith, but who are comparatively weak in the faith. At the same time, it should teach all true believers not to rest contented with a low degree of this grace, but that it is their duty to be “strong in the faith, giving glory to God.” It is very important, also, to remember, that faith is a leading grace, on which, under God, love, joy, holiness, and all other graces, are dependent, and to which they will all bear a proportion. Without this grace it is impossible to please God at all; but, with this grace in any degree, the soul is safe, and God is pacified; and with it in a high degree, the soul is very joyful, and God is much glorified. “If thou canst believe,” said Christ to the father of the dumb child;§ “all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out.

\* Matt. xvii. 20, xxi. 21.

† Rom. xiv. 1.

† 2 Thess. i. 3.

§ Mark ix. 23.

and said, with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." So let each of us earnestly say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Lord, increase my faith!

The Fourth and last topic included in this passage is that of *humility*. Pride is natural to fallen man. It reigns in the unrenewed, and it still keeps a hold of the regenerated soul. Sometimes, when faith is strong, and obedience very exemplary, there is a danger of the heart being lifted up; therefore, our Lord inculcates, parabolically, the duty of Christian humility, in the following verses: "*But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go\* and sit down to meat? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*"

We cannot suppose that our Lord here intends to countenance harshness or indifference to servants; for nothing would be more opposed to the whole spirit of Christianity, which requires men to do to others as they would that they should do to them. But not to speak of slaves, it is well known that free servants have voluntarily engaged themselves to their masters, and have made over to them their time and labour, which have become their property, so that, when they serve them faithfully, and to the utmost of their ability, they have only done what was their duty, and have nothing to boast of.

As to the spiritual application of this parable, it reminds us that we are all the servants of God; we are so by right of creation, of providence, and of redemption. It reminds us, further, that we are bound to serve him perfectly, at all times, with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. But, this being the case, it is quite plain that we can never do more than what our duty requires—never bring God under an obligation to us. Suppose we were to serve him thus perfectly, we should only do what was absolutely required of us, and should not be performing any work of

\* Rather, "come," or "come in," so the word *παρελθων* is occasionally used. For example, in Luke xii. 37, and Acts xxiv. 7. Arrian, i. 8, and ii. 1. *Ὡς παρελθων εἰσω της πολιως*, quum ingressi essent urbem.

supererogation. "Who hath first given unto the Lord, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." But our service is imperfect: we are sinners, and great sinners before the Lord; and therefore, the conclusion comes out with still more clearness and force. How obvious is it that our services, at the very best, cannot be profitable to Almighty God! In the language of Eliphaz, "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" And, in the words of the Psalmist, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight."\* It is worthy of remark, that the very apostles (for it is to them that Christ is speaking) are here taught to consider themselves as unprofitable servants. How much more, then, does this estimate of ourselves become us! Surely, it well becomes us to say, "We are unprofitable servants;" "Our best righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" and "Our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away."

Be admonished ye who are looking for acceptance with God, in whole, or in part, on the ground of your own righteousness. How contrary your expectation at once to reason and to Scripture! If you have sinned at all (and how can you say that you have not?), it is quite impossible for you to make up for past sin by obedience for the future; because, though that were perfect, it would be required for the time. Hear the voice of Christ teaching you to regard yourselves as unprofitable servants; and learn to say with Paul, "What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" "that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Be admonished, also, ye who do really habitually trust in Christ, lest you forget yourselves, and be filled with self-admiration. It will be difficult for you at times to keep out pride; but, be on your guard against it, and remember

\* Job xxii. 2; Ps. xvi. 3.

that "pride goeth before a fall." Consider how, even in heaven, where there is no sin, the angels veil their faces with their wings, and the saints cast their crowns before the throne. Still trust in God's mercy through the Redeemer, and seek at last, as sinners saved by grace, to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

Be admonished those of you who are very deeply and painfully convinced of your unprofitableness and sinfulness, and learn here, that, while you do well to be humbled, you have no reason to despond. Let your contrition be tempered with thankfulness that a way of acceptance is provided for you; and let a sense of your own unworthiness lead you to rely on Him who is worthy, and who, having been slain, has redeemed you unto God by his blood. In this way, you will be exalted through him, just in proportion to the degree in which you are abased in your own eyes.

Finally, let all of you who are the Lord's servants indeed, make his service your great business and delight. As the servant, on his return from working in the field, is sent to work in the house, and to attend to his master's wishes, in the first place, and before he eats and drinks himself, so reckon you it, not a burden, but a pleasure, to pass immediately from one duty to another—in a word, to be always serving your heavenly Master. Serve him well, and serve him first. Attend to his honour, and to his cause, before you think of yourselves; and you will find that you will be gainers, and not losers, by this self-renunciation. Give him the *glory* of his grace, and he will bestow on you the *blessings* of his grace. Do your duty; and, depend on it, he will attend to your comfort. Glorify him by a simple reliance on his mercy, and by a careful obedience of his commandments. Thus, though you cannot profit him, as you may a fellow-creature, he will graciously accept your feeble endeavours to glorify him before man; and though you never can have any claim of merit, you shall have an abundant reward of grace. No service you do to him, or his, however slight, shall be overlooked; even a cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward. He will acknowledge you as his own at last, and address you in the gracious words, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

## LECTURE XC.

LUKE XVII. 11-19.

“ And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. 15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17. And Jesus, answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.”

THIS passage contains an account of the cure of the ten lepers, which is not found in any of the other evangelists. In considering the cure of the one leper, in the 5th chapter of Luke, from the 12th verse, we took occasion to be somewhat full on the general subject of leprosy, so that we may now be more brief on that point, and dwell chiefly on the circumstances which are peculiar to the history before us. God grant, that, while endeavouring to do so, we may be effectually reminded of our duty, in respect both of our need of temporal and spiritual mercies, and also, of the conduct which becomes us when we have received them.

Being now on his journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, our Lord having first passed through the remaining part of Galilee, had next to pass “ *through the midst of\* Samaria and Galilee,*” which lay directly in his way; and Samaria is here put, not for the city of Samaria, but for the country connected with it. Thus, in the 4th chapter of John, we have the following account of Christ’s prosecuting the same journey in the opposite direction. “ He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is

\* *Δια μέσσω* (like *ἀνα μέσσω*) here seems to signify that Christ passed not through the heart of Samaria and Galilee, but between them, or through their confines.

called Sychar." We formerly read, in the 9th chapter, how, when Christ wished to enter into a village of the Samaritans, "they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem;" and this happened when, as it is there expressed, "the time was come that he should be received up," and when he had therefore "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Most expositors are of opinion, that that passage in the 9th chapter is introduced here because of its connection with the immediately preceding subject, and before the order of time, and hence, that it corresponds in order of time with that now under consideration. If this opinion be correct, we see here God's providence overruling the wrath of men, and causing it to promote his own glory. The bigotry of the inhabitants of one village prevented Jesus from entering it; but this led him to direct his steps to another village, near which he was met by the lepers.

*"As he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers."* We formerly observed that the leprosy is a disease which appears outwardly in dry white scales, and is infectious, loathsome, painful, and deadly. It was frequently inflicted of old, as a special mark of the divine displeasure, as in the case of Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah.\* It was commonly considered as almost incurable by human means; it was declared by the law of Moses to constitute ceremonial uncleanness; and it was appointed to be dealt with by the priest according to directions which are minutely detailed in the 13th and 14th chapters of Leviticus. When any person was found to be under the influence of the plague of leprosy, it was enacted, among other things, that he should live apart from other people, without the camp at first, and afterwards, without the city or village.† This circumstance accounts for those lepers meeting Christ near the village, and not in it. It accounts, also, for there being so many of them together; for as they were forbidden to associate with others, they would naturally form a society among themselves. When the Syrians, who were besieging Samaria, had fled in consternation during the night, four leprous men, who were at the "entering in of the gate," were the first to discover their flight; and the method they

\* Numb. xii. 10; 2 Kings v. 27; 2 Chron. xxvi. 19.

† Herodotus (book i.) says, that if any Persian was affected with the leprosy he was not allowed to enter into a city, or to mix with other Persians.

took to make the good news known in the city, was to "call to the porter of the city, and tell him," who "called the porters, and they told them to the king's house within."\* These ten lepers "*stood afar off*," lest their touch or near approach should literally affect, or ceremonially defile, others.

Having, doubtless, heard the fame of Jesus' miracles, when they now saw him at some distance, "*they lifted up their voices*," they loudly and earnestly entreated him, and addressing him by his usual name, with the addition of a term of respect, said, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*." They did not say exactly what was the nature of the relief they wanted; but they used very intelligible and very expressive language, knowing that he would readily perceive their miserable plight, and being persuaded of his ability to cure them. How excellent, and how worthy of frequent adoption by us all, is this prayer, "Have mercy on us!" It is at once brief and comprehensive, simple and touching. It is so general, as to be applicable to every case, and yet so specific in the intention of the supplicants, and the corresponding knowledge of Him to whom it is addressed, as to express the most exact idea, and to meet every want, whether temporal or spiritual. Often, then, and earnestly, to Him in whom we trust as our Saviour, and whom we are bound to obey as our Lord, let us be found saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

In reply to this earnest application of the ten lepers, Jesus did not immediately heal them, nor did he expressly say that he would do so; but "*he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests*"—a direction which implied that he entertained a purpose of healing them, and that in complying with the direction they would obtain the cure they sought. He performed his miracles in various ways, and this was one of those which were performed by his invisible agency, when the subjects of it were at some distance. So it was in the case of the nobleman of Capernaum's son,† though Jesus expressed his purpose more plainly: "Go thy way; thy son liveth. And as he was going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth." This direction to the lepers served as a test of their obedience; for, had they foolishly and presumptuously called in question the propriety and utility of the direction, and refused to comply with it, they would not have been healed.

\* 2 Kings vii. 3.

† John iv. 50.

Naaman, for example,\* at first despised the direction given him by Elisha to go and wash seven times in Jordan; he was prevailed on, however, by his servants to comply; and, if he had not complied, his cure would not have taken place. Some of the ceremonies appointed in cases of leprosy could not be properly observed without going up to Jerusalem; but, as there were priests residing in various parts of the country, it would be easy for the lepers at least to go and show themselves to some of them. Besides being a test of obedience on the part of the lepers, this direction served to mark a regard to the law on the part of Christ: the ceremonial law being still in force, he was careful to honour it in every respect. He honoured, also, what may be called the intermediate dispensation of John the Baptist, to whom he said, in reference to his baptism: "Suffer it to be so, now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was the office of the priests, according to the law in Leviticus, to observe, and to pronounce, both as to the existence and as to the cure of leprosy; and, therefore, our Lord directed these lepers to go to them. Besides, this was obviously a wise direction, in this instance, as compliance with it tended to awaken the attention of the priests and the people, to establish the fact of the miraculous cure in the most incontrovertible way, and thus to convert men to the faith.

While the lepers were on the way to show themselves to the priests, some of whom, probably, lived in the neighbourhood, "*they were cleansed,*" they were suddenly and perfectly cured by the miraculous exertion of Christ's power. What a display of his divinity! and what a kindness to the afflicted men! It might have been supposed that they would all have been deeply impressed with gratitude for the favour they had received, and forward to acknowledge it. Only one of them, however, felt and acted in this becoming way. "*And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice, glorified God:*" gave God the praise of his recovery; and, in doing so, "*fell down on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.*" The connection between his glorifying God, and giving thanks to Christ, is here very noticeable. It is probable that the other nine thanked God in a general way; but this man alone thanked him aright, and acceptably, in acknowledging his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who was indeed

\* 2 Kings v.



God, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" and of whom it is said that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." This act of divine worship Christ received and commended; which was only consistent with the doctrine of his Godhead. John, in his Revelation, writes: "I fell at his feet" (the angel's feet) "to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God."

We are informed that the man who manifested this gratitude "*was a Samaritan*." The Samaritans were a mixed race of people, their worship was schismatical, their advantages were small, in comparison with those of the Jews, and they seem to have been generally irreligious. The Jews, however, carried their dislike to them to a most unreasonable extent, refusing to have any friendly dealings with them.\* But, notwithstanding the contempt in which they were held by the Jews, and the errors with which their system was chargeable, we find that many of them were early converted to the faith of Christ. After the account of his conversation with the woman of Samaria at Sychar, it is added,† "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, who testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." We read, too, in the Acts of the Apostles, of the signal success of the gospel afterwards in the city of Samaria itself. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. And there was great joy in that city." We may here observe, that it frequently happens that those who have had very inferior privileges surpass those who have been very highly favoured. Privileges, when not really improved, are generally rested in, and puff up with pride, formality, and self-righteousness, which shut the eyes, and harden the heart, against the gospel of the grace of God. Thus our

\* For a more full account of the Samaritans, see Lecture L.

† John iv. 39.

Lord's saying is fulfilled: "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

"*And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?* Not that he was ignorant of the number healed, or of what had become of the nine, for "he knew all things." But he speaks indignantly, reproving the impiety and ingratitude of the nine, who, though all, or most of them, appear to have been Jews, which rendered their conduct doubly criminal, had gone off satisfied with their bodily cure, and without expressing their thanks to its Author, or acknowledging him, or seeking to him for their spiritual good. Somewhat in the same way, when our fallen first parents hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden, "the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" Sinners depart from God: they "soon forget the Lord's works, and wait not for his counsel."

Men are called on to "give unto the Lord the glory due to his name," and "whoso offereth praise glorifieth him;" but, in this case, Jesus had to say, "*There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.*" This Samaritan was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenants of promise, and to all the privileges of the visible Church; yet he was brought to give glory to God, and to know, believe, love, and obey the Saviour, while the generality of the Jewish people continued unbelieving and impenitent. In like manner, the Roman centurion,\* whose servant was sick of the palsy, manifested a faith which surpassed even that of the believing Jews, and which put to utter shame the unbelieving. Jesus said, with regard to him, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Let us beware, lest we who bear the Christian name, and early and fully enjoy the Christian light, perish in ignorance, unbelief, and rebellion, while the very heathen enter into the kingdom of heaven before our eyes.

Jesus kindly bade the grateful and adoring stranger "*arise*" from his prostrate position, and "*go his way*;" and

Matt. viii. 10.

he dismissed him with the important declaration, "*Thy faith hath made thee whole.*" He declared his bodily cure to have been wrought in answer to his prayer of faith, and thus to have been bestowed on him in a way of mercy, and as a blessing in every sense; which could not be said of the rest. But, it is to be remembered, that the word here rendered "hath made thee whole," is often rendered, and might here be rendered, "hath saved thee." So it is rendered, both in the case of the blind man in the next chapter,\* "*Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee,*" and also in the case of the woman who was a sinner, who is not said to have had any bodily ailment, chap. vii. 50: Jesus "*said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.*" On the whole, there is reason to hope that this man received, not only a bodily, but also a spiritual cure, and that the faith which cleansed him from the leprosy, cleansed him also from sin, and saved his soul from death.

Such is the history of this case, which does not present any difficulties requiring much explanation. Let us, in concluding, improve it in reference both to bodily and spiritual disease and recovery.

First—in reference to *bodily disease and recovery*. Many infectious, painful, and deadly diseases have broken in upon us, and all in consequence of sin. Let us acknowledge the hand of God in them, whether they be of a common or extraordinary kind. In them all, we suffer deservedly, and suffer less than we deserve. It is of God's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not. When under disease, we do well to repair to the physician, and to use means for our recovery; but let us not neglect to apply to the Lord, and to beseech him to have mercy on us, and make us whole. The Lord does graciously restore multitudes from sickness to health: but, alas! it is only a small proportion of them who manifest true gratitude, and prove that they have derived permanent spiritual benefit from such dispensations. When they are restored, too many soon forget the hand that raised them up, and return to thoughtlessness and sin. "Their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew: it goeth away." Are there not some of you whom the Lord has restored from painful disease, and from the bed of languishing? Feel reproved now, if you have practically forgotten your own impressions and his kindness, and are still living without God and without

\* Luke xviii. 42.

Christian hope in the world. Let all of us who have experienced any deliverance of this kind be admonished of our duty to give God the glory, to fall down, so to speak, at Jesus' feet, and to spend our graciously preserved life and restored strength in his service. Let each of us (with more care, however, than Hezekiah displayed to render for ever to the Lord according to the benefit done to us) adopt Hezekiah's language on his recovery: "The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." The sentiments of the 116th Psalm are also most suitable: "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." But let us improve this history,

Secondly, *in reference to spiritual disease and recovery.* Sin is the disease of the soul, and may well be compared to the leprosy. Like the leprosy, it is *epidemical and infectious*. It is epidemical—it prevails much among the people. It is not like a disease which is seen in a few instances; it attacks multitudes at once. The word epidemical must here be understood in a stronger sense than usual; for sin prevails to an extent which has no parallel in any bodily disease whatever, and has actually attacked every individual of the human race. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" "Jews and Gentiles are all under sin: as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Sin, like the leprosy, is also infectious. It has a constant tendency to diffuse itself, and to extend its influence. Sinners entice other sinners to sin, and their example is most contagious. Sin is, indeed, a hereditary disease, for it is derived from Adam, all the way down through the past generations of men, so that they were all "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin;" and this is an aggravating circumstance. But still, men are liable to new and additional accessions of this disease by infection, by intercourse with others who are very far gone in the disease; and this makes the malady worse and worse. It thus becomes

more malignant, and extends itself, like the spreading leprosy. Sin, like the leprosy, is a *loathsome* disease. More disgusting than the leprosy in a bodily sense, is sin in a spiritual. It is the abominable thing that God hates. "A wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame." For a time, indeed, men may be insensible of the odious and disgusting nature of the spiritual leprosy, and may continue so till they are suddenly destroyed by it, and that without remedy; but, in all true penitents, the words are fulfilled, "Then shall ye remember your own ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and for your abominations." Sin, like the leprosy, is *severe and painful, and affects the whole man*. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; that have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Its painful effects, when it is brought home to the conscience, are thus described by the Psalmist: "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thine hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me."—"I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh." And sin, like the leprosy, is a *deadly* disease. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."—"The wages of sin is death." Sin is itself spiritual death, for the unrenewed are "dead in trespasses and sins." The leprosy, or some other disease, may be the proximate cause of temporal death, but sin is the procuring cause of death, and of whatever leads to death. And the disease of sin, when unchecked, ends in a death with which the death of the body is no more to be compared than time with eternity, even the second death, which is endless misery. Sin, then, is well compared to the leprosy.

Under this spiritual disease all men are naturally labouring; but all are not sensible of it. How few are as anxious for deliverance from this disease as they would be for deliverance from the leprosy, or any other malignant bodily disease! Consider well what your safety requires. It requires that you should feel and acknowledge your diseased state. It requires that you should apply to the Physician

of souls, the Saviour, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." The means of cure are provided, according to the gospel, in the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet too many disregard these means, and continue under sin.

Doubtless there are some of you who, if we could suppose your spiritual condition to become visible to the eye in your bodily appearance, would exhibit a very different spectacle from what you now do. The bloom of health would vanish from your countenance, and the white and scaly leprosy come up on it. Instead of that air of carelessness, would be the look of heavy gloom. "Instead of sweet smell" would be the offensive odour of putridity; "and instead of a girdle, a rent; and instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty." And will you not think seriously of your situation? Like those under the plague of leprosy of old, who came out to show themselves to the priest,\* you have come out to show yourselves to the minister; and he, after looking on you, and carefully considering your case, now solemnly pronounces you to be unclean. "The plague is in your head," and the plague is in your heart: ye are "utterly unclean." Follow in its spirit the direction given to the leper in the law: "The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean." Do not trifle with this dreadful malady, but have recourse to decided measures. Precautionary measures are now too late; no quarantine can now save you; for you are infected already. Palliatives will be insufficient, for the disease has made great progress, and is increasing fast. You must undergo a radically cleansing and restorative process. Seek purification by the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin. Seek the new and clean heart, through the purifying efficacy of the Word and Spirit. Say, in language originally suggested by the rites in cleansing the leper, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Come to the great Physician of souls, who proved himself to be able and willing to save you by healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people." Say, each of you, to him, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and he will say to you, in effect, "I will: be thou clean." He will say to you, as to the woman who was cured by touching his garment,

\* Lev. xiii. 1.

"Thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

As for you who have applied to Christ for a cure, and who are under his healing hand, be thankful that your cure is begun, and that the danger of endless death is past. Be humble, however, as still having the remains of the disease about you. Continue to use the means appointed till your cure be complete. It cannot be that any of you who have derived spiritual benefit from Christ should be altogether ungrateful; but study to be more thankful than you have hitherto been. You have done right in coming up to show yourselves in God's house; and here the Psalmist's language will exactly suit you: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." Go and show yourselves also to the world, not in ostentation, but in clearly evidencing the reality of your cure, and your possession of renovated spiritual health, by the cheerful discharge of every duty. Study what more you can do for your own improvement, for the good of your fellow-creatures, and for the glory of your God and Saviour; and, may He who says to every one of his people, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," strengthen you more and more, till he bring you where you shall be no more plagued, or pained at the heart, because you shall no more offend against a God of purity and of love.

END OF VOL. II.





